



Suzanne Mubarak, portrait of the week by Bahgory 10

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'No room for war'

President Mubarak warns that the alternative to Middle East peace will be a new cycle of violence

Arafat call
PALESTINIAN President Yasser Arafat, accusing Israel of violating its 1994 economic agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, demanded yesterday that it be rewritten. Arafat said at a Paris World Bank donors' meeting on the West Bank and Gaza that the autonomous Palestinian areas were losing \$7 million a day because of Israel's decision to close them off last February after bomb attacks by Islamist militants took place inside the country.

President Hosni Mubarak said yesterday that despite the current stalemate, there could be no substitute to progress towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Warning that the alternative would be a fresh outbreak of violence, Mubarak said a global settlement should be based on the restoration of the rights of the Palestinians and Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

Addressing the general secretariat of the Arab Journalists Federation, whom he received at his Heliopolis office, Mubarak described peace as a strategic objective. "It is natural that we should face some difficult negotiations but the determination to reach a just and comprehensive peace should never waver," he said.

Mubarak was visiting the area to inaugurate the third of a group of four tunnels under the Suez Canal, through which water from the Nile will be channelled to reclaim land in the Sinai Desert. "For the first time in history, the Nile waters will reach Sinai, leading to the development of new agricultural and industrial communities," he said. "This will be the starting point for a new demographic map, with which Egypt will enter the new millennium."

Egypt's interest is not lost. The role of the press in the Arab world should be "to unite and not divide, to rally Arab public opinion and not fragment it. We should show respect for the leaders and national symbols of the Arab world."

300

Three hundred issues and close on six years. Al-Ahram Weekly can now claim a heritage — albeit a very brief one — all its own. Our roots go back much further, however, and to mark the occasion, we decided to take our readers back a couple of hundred years, tracing the history of Egyptian journalism (see supplement inside). Opposite, illustrious contributors and readers offer kind comments, and on page 4 of the supplement, we poll the views of more readers. For our part, we picked a number of pages (reproduced in miniature) which offer a fair glimpse at the last 299 issues.



"Newspapers are usually windows on the outside world. The view from each differs according to the angle of the window; some show nothing but barren desert, others afford a more panoramic view. 'Al-Ahram Weekly' is unique in that it is a window through which the outside world can look in on a rich Egyptian and Arab landscape made up of news and views, and gain a deeper understanding of the diversity of political and cultural life."

Mohamed Hassanein Heikal



"Al-Ahram Weekly is unique of its kind. It has a remarkable diversity of writers and opinions, all of them presented with an eye on both informing and helping its readers to understand the complexities of the contemporary Arab world. It is especially useful about Egypt itself, no other English (or for that matter Arabic) language weekly is so full of material about politics, popular culture, the arts, ideas, cuisine, economics and social life, while affording its readers the luxury of getting all that in one economically packed weekly journal. In addition, Al-Ahram Weekly provides not only perspective on news as it happens, more or less immediately, but also a wider and deeper view that takes long term trends and developments perspicaciously into account."

Edward Said



"Al-Ahram Weekly has been a leader of sound and responsible journalism in Egypt for almost a decade. The high standard of professionalism which characterises its news and editorial content is a great credit to the practice of journalism in Egypt. The Weekly has credibility and integrity as a source of news. I regularly read and benefit from its incisive commentary and news stories, and find especially interesting the domestic political, cultural, archaeological and literary features."

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"It is my pleasure to congratulate Al-Ahram Weekly on its 300th edition. I make a point of reading every edition of the Weekly — indeed it is required reading in the British Embassy. I am impressed by the quality and breadth of coverage you achieve, both in local and international stories. I look forward to reading the Weekly for what I'm sure will be many successful issues to come."

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"Al-Ahram Weekly is a fine publication. It is very well produced, full of relevant information and also very readable. I read it regularly. Naturally I read the articles of current interest, especially political, with greater attention. The Weekly covers the various aspects of the Middle East peace process exceedingly well and is up-to-date and informative on subjects of current interest relating to Egypt and the region, which are of interest to the diplomatic community."

Kanwal Sibal
Ambassador of India

Israeli swoop

ISRAELI security forces arrested more than 30 Islamic militants on Monday and Tuesday, in a crackdown aimed at preventing violence ahead of the planned Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said yesterday.

The arrests targeted members of Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Hebron and Ramallah. Meanwhile, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish group that helped Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to power last May summoned thousands of followers to Hebron on Tuesday to protest against the planned pullback of troops in the West Bank city.

Under this plan, Israeli troops will evacuate 80 per cent of Hebron but remain in the downtown area where the Jewish settlers are living in five tiny enclaves.

Ghali sticks to his guns

Despite an American veto, Boutros Boutros-Ghali is standing firm in his battle to win a second term as UN secretary-general, writes Hoda Tawfik from New York

The United Nations appeared to be facing an impasse after the United States, standing alone against all the other members of the Security Council, vetoed a second term for Secretary-General Boutros Ghali.

Ghali and his supporters — the great majority of states in the United Nations — showed no intention of giving up the fight soon.

On Tuesday, US Ambassador Madeleine Albright voted against a new five-year term for Ghali on the grounds that the United Nations needed someone more amenable to reform. The other 14 Security Council members voted for him.

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The debate goes on

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Laila Takla

The right to get married

Awad El-Morr,
Chief Justice of the
Supreme
Constitutional Court,
examines legislation
concerning
restrictions on
matrimony



In case No 23 of the 16th judicial year decided on the 18 March 1995, the constitutional issue was the validity or otherwise of sub-para six of Article 73 of the law on the State Council promulgated by decree law No 47 for the year 1972.

The petitioner — being a member of the State Council married to an alien in violation of the challenged provision — brought a case before the Supreme Administrative Court demanding the cancellation of a presidential decision transferring him to the Administrative Prosecution Authority, claiming that his request for the transfer had been made under duress to avoid the termination of his mandate in the council. Upon a prima facie consideration of the plausibility of the constitutional issue so raised, the petitioner brought the issue for adjudication before the Supreme Constitutional Court.

Article 73 of the law on the State Council promulgated by decree law No 37 (1972) spells out the requirement for nominating a member to that Council stating — in line with its sub-para six — that members of this Council cannot get married to aliens. Exemption from this requirement would apply only to those authorised by the president of the state, provided that the spouse has the Arab nationality.

Under Article Six of the promulgating law, the requirement set forth under sub para six of Article 73 of the law on the Council of the State should not apply to members of the Council married to aliens after the entry into force of Law No 55 (1959) concerning its reorganisation.

In striking down the challenged provision, the court pointed out that the uncontested norm of securing personal liberty dominates and controls all the facets of our life, being its base and ultimate purpose. Integrated in this freedom are inter-related rights including the right to marry, to form a family and to raise one's children and maintain their bread, which are all of a personal nature adaptive to moral and religious values, and in accord with societal traditions. Marriage is so intimate to the degree of being sacred; reflective of the most private emotions and personal independent decisions; expressive of the close inward impulse of familiar relationships and associated patterns of behaviour, and in making into one the spectrum of internal life. In substance, marriage demonstrates an unbroken chain of firmness and constancy, the Court reasoned.

Introducing limitations on so compacted a relationship which restrict options for its creation are impermissible unless clearly justified by a substantial governmental interest.

Individualised choices in marriage peculiarise the different aspects of familial life, and are not beyond its structure, being directly related to its formation and attached to the integrated human personality.

In addition, a private autonomy of choice bears on values inherent in the ordered liberty and the due process of law in their affirmation of the need to protect domestic and solemn ties of affection in the sphere of matrimonial alliance, the Court argued.

That not all constitutions mention either the right to freely and consensually enter into marriage, or that of independently choosing the other co-joint, is no indication of their non-existence. Nor would such omission infer a denial of their due protection, or entitle invading their confined bounds, the Court emphasised.

However, the pertinence of both rights to privacy zones is not questioned. In fact, constitutional provisions when taken as a whole, mutually construed and rationally understood in line with their prospective features, would suggest the existence of rights other than those specifically mentioned therein. Therefore, the right to education includes the right of a citizen to freely choose the kind and level of education adaptive to his abilities and faculties. The right of association necessarily embraces that of the freedom of expression in order to secure associational values and to give them life and substance, taking into account that association represents a forum for open discussion on matters of public concern. The same applies to the right to have a family under Article 9 of the Constitution, being the emanation of the parents' and guardians' right to have means of their own choice for elevating their born or custodial children. Freedom of expression and that of the press referred to in Articles 47 and 48 of the constitution denote as well not only the right to utter and to print, but also the right to read, to distribute, to educate, to receive information and to conduct inquiries concerning public grievances. Only within peripheral rights could those enumerated in the constitutional document be duly preserved either in quality or scope, the Court agreed.

The Egyptian Constitution, being perceptive of injustice and intrusion done in the past, introduced Article 45 which provides that the sanctity of the private life of all citizens should be protected by law, it being understood that there are certain areas which represent to all individuals the utmost part of zones of secrecy and intimacy the disclosure of which ought not to be admitted in order to keep their peculiarities out of sight especially in the face of highly interceptive scientific methods intrusive upon the most delicate affairs of others and their associated patterns of conduct, the Court observed.

Invasion of the privacies of life in all these areas mostly prejudiced their concealment and betrayed their confidentialities. In zones of privacy of this kind lie two interests apparently separate but factually integrated: the one relating to the scope of personal affairs which should not be revealed and the other to the domain of autonomy in taking certain important decisions of one's choice. Both interests if combined will result in protective measures embracing consolidated relationships within which rest everyone's right to have a spouse of his own choice, the Court affirmed.

The Constitution firstly recognised, under para one of Article 48, the sanctity of private life. In supplement of this right para two of the same article provided that means of communications including postal, telegraphic and telephonic, are not to be confiscated or disclosed to others except under a judicial warrant confined to a prescribed period in conformity with law. However, the right to marry along with its tributaries, including the right to freely choose a spouse, were not mentioned therein. Nevertheless, this absence of mention does not imply a denial or negation, their being the complement of personal freedom and the rational continuum of the right to privacy, the Court detailed.

In addition, the constitution itself must be construed in the light of the supposed time of the times, being an evolving document responsive to changing needs, the Court remarked.

Under Article nine of the constitution, family is the base of society and its ingredients are religion, morals and patriotism. The state undertakes to maintain and develop its characteristics mirroring societal values and traditions. Understood as being the principal unit of social structure, and given the fact that the only path for its formation is found in an independent choice of a spouse, access thereto must not be inhibited, the Court required.

In addition, international conventions and declarations recognised the fundamental civil nature of this right in respect of which no discrimination shall be made. While the legislature may incriminate adultery and other activities accomplished beyond the admitted bounds of wedlock, it is equally true that the protection of legitimate matrimonial relationships is no less imperative. Therefore, the legislature must be deprived from any discretion as to who will marry, and with whom, unless motivated by a substantial interest, the Court proceeded.

Acknowledgment of the right to beget a child necessarily generates the right to enter into a wedlock relationship apart from which no child could be born.

In Islamic law privacy has been firmly ascertained, and marriage sanctified with the consent of whoever reaches the age of majority, a right which is also endorsed by international instruments including the Convention on Consent to Marriage, minimum age for marriage and registration of marriages (1962); the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1967); the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which provides in Articles 8 and 12 that every one has the right to his private and family life, his home and his correspondence, and that men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family according to national laws governing the exercise of this right, the Court noted.

Neither the laws regulating the judicial power, nor the law on the Supreme Constitutional Court, have ever restricted the right of their members to get married to an alien in recognition of the due protection to the personal freedom and the sanctity of private life, both enshrined in Articles 41 and 45 of the constitution which in turn under Article 57 considered violations thereof as constituting a crime which shall not sustain prescription. Therefore, the Court went on, legislative provisions alien to the judicial function and having no rational relationship with the performance of its duties shall not stand.

The government argued that the challenged provision bears on members of the State Council as a judicial body vested with the power to decide the legitimacy of administrative decisions and to finally adjudicate important disputes of a disciplinary or administrative nature, thus entitling its members to have access to the most sensitive governmental information requiring national allegiance which would be weakened if their marriage to aliens was permitted. Denying the soundness of this argument, the Court held the opinion that its power of judicial review dramatically affects national interests of vital importance and plays a decisive role in the shaping of societal values along with the formulation of mandatory constitutional patterns of conduct. However, under its law, choosing a spouse of whatever nationality is granted to all its members.

Therefore, the Court went on, the challenged provision arbitrarily discriminated against the members of the State Council by depriving them rights permitted to others despite the legal premise that all are similarly situated, in defiance of the equal protection clause articulated under Article 40 of the constitution. Moreover, enforcement of the challenged provision mandates with respect to members of the Council nominated in violation thereof the immediate termination of their services in contradiction with the right to work and its concomitant safeguards provided for in Articles 13 and 14 of the constitution.

The challenged provision, being a clear departure from constitutional norms specified in Articles 9, 12, 13, 14, 40, 41, 45, is to be declared void, the court concluded.



photo: Abdel-Hakim Ahmed

Hebron 'apartheid' unacceptable

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak said on Tuesday that Israel's demands in negotiations with the Palestinians on the West Bank town of Hebron were unacceptable and likely to lead to a new outbreak of violence. The two biggest obstacles facing the negotiations were Israel's demand for the right of "hot pursuit" and the problem of El-Shohada [martyrs] street, which Israel wants confined to Jewish settlers, Mubarak said.

"Hot pursuit is unacceptable to the Palestinians because it means that there is a new authority above the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians cannot live with that," he said. Moreover, granting Israel this right could lead to complications in the future and a new cycle of violence, Mubarak added.

He compared the problem of El-Shohada Street to apartheid in the old South Africa. "It cannot be said

that this street belongs to the settlers only and that the Palestinians are not allowed to use it because this is unacceptable and illogical," he said.

Mubarak spoke to reporters after inaugurating a tunnel below the Suez Canal, through which water from the Nile river will be pumped to irrigate northern Sinai. The Al-Salam canal, as the project is called, begins at Farsakour near Damietta, runs eastward until it reaches the Suez Canal, crosses under the waterway and runs eastward again for a distance of 86 kilometres until it reaches a point south of El-Arish, the largest town in the Sinai desert. Its waters will be used to irrigate more than half a million feddans of land, both west and east of the Suez Canal. The project, which also involves the establishment of 27 new communities, will cost a total of LE5.7 billion.

Brotherhood torn by unprecedented schism

The outlawed Muslim Brotherhood is said to be facing its worst ever internal crisis after three leading members defected to join the would-be founders of a centrist party. Amira Howaldy reports

Three leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood have resigned to join 13 of their colleagues who earlier left the party to establish a new centrist political party, Al-Wasat. The exodus is said to have caused the worst split in the Brotherhood's 73-year history.

To compound matters further, several members of the group have voiced dissatisfaction with the way the Guidance Bureau — the Brotherhood's collective leadership — handled the discussion, and have made an unprecedented call for its resignation. Meanwhile, leaders of the group's branches in the Nile Delta decided to put Brotherhood-related activity on ice to protest at what they called the "disastrous situation" brought about by the organisation's top brass.

The three members who have resigned from the Brotherhood were named as Salah Abdel-Karim, deputy secretary-general of the Engineers Syndicate; Ibrahim El-Beyouti, a researcher in Islamic affairs who was put on trial last year, but acquitted; and Mohamed Abdel-Latif, head of an Islamic publishing house. They joined 13 others who walked out in August to make a hitherto unsuccessful attempt to gain official party status for Al-Wasat.

As usual, the group's Supreme Guide Mustafa Mashhour denied that "any such thing has taken place," describing the reports as "newspaper gossip." But according to the defectors, a "landslide war" is being orchestrated and carefully planned by the Guidance Bureau to prevent the Wasat founders from establishing a political party.

The crisis began to unfold last January, when Abul-Ela Madi, assistant secretary-general of the Engineers Syndicate and a leading Brotherhood figure, made the first bid to establish Al-Wasat, with the backing of 74 Brotherhood members and three Christians. The group's leaders, who apparently were not consulted about the move,

reacted angrily and ordered all Brotherhood-associated Wasat members to leave the new party. Many complied, after coming under severe pressure, leaving the centrists with fewer than 50 would-be founders, the minimum required for the establishment of a political party.

Madi's bid was quashed by the Political Parties Committee, which refused to license Al-Wasat, and Madi himself was briefly arrested. But other Wasat members have lodged an appeal against the committee's decision before the Political Parties Tribunal, which will consider their case on 14 December.

Madi was apparently "hurt" by the unfriendly reaction of the Guidance Bureau to his attempts to form the new party. Following his acquittal in August, he walked out of the Brotherhood and prepared to launch a counter-offensive. Madi was joined by several Brotherhood members who not only resigned from the Brotherhood, but also, for the first time, leaked information about the power struggle inside the organisation between the older and younger generations.

According to the defectors, Mashhour and his deputy, Masumoun El-Hodeibi, are planning to bring their war against Al-Wasat to the Political Parties Tribunal. Hodeibi has already assigned five lawyers to collect the signatures of Al-Wasat founders who are ready to quit the party's ranks. Hodeibi, the defectors said, will present these resignations to the court to prove that the group has less than the 50 members, thus providing the court with a legal justification for refusing to grant a licence to the embryonic party.

Although Hodeibi is enlisting the services of such prominent lawyers as Moukhtar Nout, treasurer of the Bar Association, the defectors predict that his anti-Wasat campaign will end in failure "because our membership is larger than the publicised figure."

The defectors, who claim to have a large following in

Court ruling

THE SUPREME Administrative Court ruled this week that the People's Assembly is the only body entitled by the Constitution to decide on the validity of the membership of MPs.

According to the court's decision, administrative courts are authorised to hear administrative cases only and have no jurisdiction to decide whether the elections in a certain constituency were conducted properly. The Court of Cassation is empowered to investigate motions contesting the validity of the membership of a certain deputy but it is the People's Assembly that has the final say, the Supreme Administrative Court said.

Dozens of candidates who lost in the last parliamentary elections of November-December 1995 have filed nearly 100 appeals with administrative courts, claiming that irregularities marred the ballot and the vote-counting. Administrative courts ruled in favour of most of them but the interior ministry, which organised the elections, appealed the rulings with the Supreme Administrative Court.

In support of Ghali

THE GRAND Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Dr Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, met on Monday with Dr Ali El-Samman, head of the Paris-based International Union for Inter-Religious Dialogue. During the meeting, Tantawi urged all-out support for UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali in his battle to win re-election for a second term, on the grounds that he served the cause of peace with a humane spirit and a high sense of objectivity.

The Grand Sheikh also said that Ghali, as he worked to promote a just peace, dealt with all religions on a footing of equality. El-Samman told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that he briefed Sheikh Tantawi on the working agenda of a religious committee, formed five months ago, to coordinate between Al-Azhar and the Vatican. The Rome-based committee will work to foster solidarity between Islam and Christianity, giving a push to common religious values.

Counterfeiters arrested

SECURITY authorities have seized \$1 million in counterfeit notes, as well as \$2 million still in the process of being forged and have arrested 14 counterfeiters. The notes were a close imitation of new \$100 bills, minted last June, which include special markings designed to prevent forgery.

Authorities went on the alert after the fake bills began to circulate in Cairo and Giza. An undercover agent managed to crack the ring when he approached one of its members and offered to buy \$5,000 worth of fake notes for LE8,000. The authorities also seized the equipment used in printing the fake bills.

Killer manhole

THREE young men drowned in a sewer on Saturday while trying to rescue a six-year-old boy who had fallen into an open manhole at the working-class suburb of Shoubra El-Kheima north of Cairo. Mohamed Abu-Serri, a university student, was the first to see the child fall into the sewer, jumped in to rescue him but disappeared in the flood waters.

Four other young men followed and the five volunteers remained inside the sewer for nearly an hour. The assembled crowd managed to rescue two of them, by using ropes to pull them back to the surface. But the three others and the boy died.

The manhole had been left uncovered by a company carrying out a sewage project in the district. The heads of the Shoubra El-Kheima district and municipal council have been suspended by Mahmoud Sherif, minister of local administration.

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Opposition MPs to target Israel

Opposition deputies are preparing to fire a series of questions on controversial issues at cabinet ministers when parliamentary debates begin on Saturday, Gamal Essam El-Din reports

Following a procedural session two weeks ago in which Ahmed Fathi Sorour was re-elected speaker, the People's Assembly will get down to business on Saturday, grappling with a host of controversial issues. Opposition deputies, both right- and left-wing, have already tabled a series of questions to cabinet ministers, on subjects ranging from Egyptian-Israeli relations to building regulations and private university education.

The issue of Egypt's relations with Israel has the lion's share of the questions tabled so far, presumably because deputies are angered by the hard-line policies of Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the stalling of the peace process.

Yassin Serageddin, leader of the Wafd Party's parliamentary group, has directed a question to Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri on what he termed the increasing number of Egyptian young men travelling to Israel. Citing the arrest in Cairo of an Israeli-Arab and an Egyptian on suspicion of spying for Israel, Serageddin's question urges the government to take urgent measures to impose tighter controls on those travelling to Israel to seek work.

"I have reliable information that, by making use of the desperate need of these young men for work, the Israeli army and Mossad have managed to recruit a large number of them to fight, and spy, against Arab countries," the question reads.

Ibrahim El-Nimiki, a ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) member for Al-Khanika in the Nile Delta Governorate of Qalyubia, also filed a question on the impact of Netanyahu's policies on the normalisation of Egyptian-Israeli relations. He urged that the government take "all the necessary measures" to halt any moves towards normalisation with "our historical enemy."

El-Nimiki told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the arrest of Israeli spies in Cairo attested to the fact that, despite Egypt's commitment to peace, Israel did not take the peace treaty seriously and spared no effort in spying on Egypt in times of peace as well as war.

Despite the increase in young men travelling to Israel in search of work, the government "has done nothing to draw the attention of these young people to the dangers of travelling to Israel, where they could fall prey to the notorious Mossad," he added.

Independent MP Ahmed Taha told the *Weekly* that he had directed a question to both El-Ganzouri and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa on the results of investigations into the killing of Egyptian prisoners of war during the 1956 and 1967 conflicts. "It is clear that the government has failed to receive any reports from Israel on the mass killing of our prisoners," Taha said. He added that he had submitted the same question to El-Ganzouri and Moussa three times before, but had not received an answer.

Leftist deputies, including five Tagammu members and one from the Nasserist Party, will continue

to express their opposition to the government's decision to open the Sinai Peninsula to foreign investors. Raafat Seif, a Tagammu deputy from Agia in the Governorate of Daqahliya, told the *Weekly* that in the last parliamentary session Tagammu members had strongly objected to laws allowing foreign investors to build roads in Sinai, because it could lead to the infiltration of Israeli companies in the guise of American corporations.

"I think the government's recent measures allowing large [foreign] investments in Sinai will ultimately expose Egyptian national security to great danger," said Seif. "Just imagine Netanyahu's aggressive policies lead to a war against Syria, and eventually, out of necessity, Egypt. What impact would that have on the Sinai investments?"

Seif urged the government to focus instead on developing the Western Desert and the Mediterranean coast. "The government should also know that it is farmers and workers, rather than foreign investors, who will develop Egypt," he added.

The collapse of an apartment building in Helwan, killing 65 people, was expected to figure prominently in the Assembly's debates. The Housing Committee, acting on the request of many members, convened earlier this week to discuss building regulations and the role of local authorities in tightening control on building work. While some members argued that the existing laws were adequate, others urged tougher penalties against building own-

ers who violated regulations as well as local authority officials and engineers in an effort to stamp out corruption. Deputy Zakaria Azmi, chief of the presidential staff, went as far as to demand the death penalty for those who violate the construction code. Azmi also urged the government's Administrative Control Authority to keep a close watch on local authorities, which he described as "rife with corruption."

Another issue on the Assembly's agenda will be private university education. A number of meetings held last month by the Assembly's education and health committees showed that parliamentarians were deeply divided over the anticipated role of the newly-established private universities in raising the standard of education. The two committees will meet again in the next few weeks to examine the curricula taught by these universities, particularly medical studies, and whether they are up to the standards set by the Doctors Syndicate.

Opposition deputies are also intent on submitting a number of draft laws to the house in its new session. Most of the opposition's bills have been either ignored or rejected by the Assembly in the past, but this would not deter the opposition deputies, according to Wafiq Ayman Nour. He is planning to submit a draft law on municipal authorities, while Yassin Serageddin will submit another draft on the exercise of political rights as part of the Wafd's push for political reform.

Spy arrests trigger Israeli furor

An Israeli Arab and an Egyptian accomplice accused of spying have been remanded in custody for 45 days. Jafar Halawani reports

Egypt, brushing aside Israeli protests, has remanded in custody for 45 days Azam Azam, a 35-year-old Israeli Arab, on charges of spying for the Mossad intelligence service and acting to harm national interests. Emad Abdel-Hamid, an Egyptian who allegedly provided Azam with information, was ordered to be held for an equal period on similar charges.

Azam, who works for an Egyptian-Israeli textile company, was arrested on 8 November outside a Cairo hotel and ordered to be held for 15 days. Before the expiry of that period, prosecution officials this week ordered him kept in custody for an additional 45 days. His arrest followed that of Abdel-Hamid, an employee of the same textile company who, according to judicial sources, confessed to having been recruited by the Mossad during a training visit to Israel.

Abdel-Hamid told investigators that he had met two young Arab-Israeli women in Israel who recruited him and that his contact in Egypt was Azam. He later met the same women in Amman and they asked him to collect information on foreign investment in Egypt and provided him with a telephone number in Israel where they could be contacted, judicial sources said.

When Abdel-Hamid returned to Egypt, he met Azam who gave him equipment used in spying activity. The equipment was found during a search of Abdel-Hamid's house, the sources said. Security agents monitored meetings between Azam and Abdel-Hamid and seized documents described as evidence of spying.

The two suspects were arrested shortly before the opening in the Egyptian capital on 12 November of a regional economic conference, prompting Israeli commentators to suggest that the arrests were designed to undermine Israel's position at the gathering. The allegation was strongly denied by Egypt.

The two were accused of spying for a foreign state and delivering information aimed at undermining Egypt's economic, political and military interests. Abdel-Hamid was also charged with receiving money for providing the information.

Azam's arrest has added to the tension in Egyptian-Israeli relations. Israel, insisting that he is not a spy, has protested his arrest to the Egyptian government and demanded that he be freed.

In a message to President Hosni Mubarak, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said the charges against Azam, a Druze from northern Israel, were completely unfounded.

But Mubarak, in an interview published last Thursday in Israel's mass circulation newspaper *Yediot Achronot*, said the man was caught with "invisible ink" and other tools of the spy trade.

"Now it is done, the man is under arrest and there is nothing to talk about," Mubarak said. "We don't fabricate. It was an Egyptian citizen who gathered and passed on information in exchange for money he received from your man. They caught Azam with invisible ink and other things. If you were to catch someone like that over here, would you say you made the story up?"

But Mubarak also called for discreet negotiations to resolve the issue during an interview on Israeli public television. "If we can do something, it should be done far from the spotlight of the media," he said. "Israel has in the past arrested Egyptians [suspected of spying] and we did not cry so loud... I don't understand what there is to spy on here. Our two countries have established relations and we don't have anything to hide. If you have questions, ask."



Torrential rains hit southern Egypt, the Red Sea coast and the New Valley oases of the Western Desert this week, destroying houses and causing a Nile cruiser to sink near Edfu in the southern province of Aswan. Fifteen people were killed and five others were missing and feared dead in the sinking last Thursday of the Princess Jihon, which was carrying 128 Czech, Slovak and Polish tourists and an Egyptian crew on a cruise between Luxor and Aswan. Eight residents of southern Egypt and the Red Sea coast were also killed in storm-related accidents.

Authorities said 108 people — 63 tourists and 45 Egyptians — were rescued after a minicraft caused the ship to run aground and overturn around 3:30pm

last Thursday. Fifteen bodies — nine tourists and six Egyptians — were recovered. Flood waters hampered the search for five missing Europeans.

Most of the 108 survivors were slightly injured after leaping off the Princess Jihon. They spent the night in hospital in the town of Edfu and most of them moved on Friday morning to a hotel in the resort of Luxor, with just the clothes they were wearing.

The accident left the ship lying on one side, half-submerged and grounded on a sand bank in the middle of the Nile near the village of Qali Al-Jabal, about 580km south of Cairo. Prosecution authorities have opened an investigation, and a technical committee was established to examine the cruiser in order

to make sure that the tragedy was not the result of a ship malfunction. An Arabic-language newspaper reported that the same ship — then called *Berdice* — sank in the same location in the early 1980s and was subsequently refloated. But the report could not be confirmed.

The torrential rains which hit southern Egypt throughout the week flooded thousands of acres, damaged highways and destroyed scores of makeshift houses.

Four members of one family were electrocuted on Sunday night when an electricity line fell on their home near Manshiya in the Governorate of Assiut. A 10-year-old girl died in Al-Minya when she was crushed by a palm tree toppled by the flooding. A woman in Assiut was electrocuted and another woman in So-

lag died of a heart attack when flash floods struck her village.

The body of a nine-year-old boy was found in a ditch in Dairout, in the Governorate of Assiut, apparently after being swept away by the floods.

The houses destroyed by the storms were mainly made of mud brick, which disintegrated in the flooding. In Mallawi in the Governorate of Al-Minya, 260 houses were flooded and rescue teams attempted to evacuate their inhabitants.

Thousands of acres of agricultural land were also under water, and power and telephone services were disrupted. Storms also lashed the Governorate of Aswan, damaging hundreds of houses, uprooting trees and telephone and electricity poles. In some areas, water levels

reached 1.5 metres and motorists had to leave their cars on the roads and run for safety.

In the Red Sea resort of Hurghada, a man was killed by an electric short circuit and 250 houses were destroyed or damaged, prompting the government to send tents and emergency supplies to the affected areas. Four charter planes carrying hundreds of tourists were diverted to Cairo on Monday, as workers cleared the runways of Hurghada Airport, which were blocked by water, mud and rocks. The flights had originated in Verona and Milan in Italy, Rome in Switzerland and Vienna in Austria. The bad weather also interrupted air traffic for 24 hours at Sharm El-Sheikh, but flights resumed on Monday.

Stranded in Sharm

Floods in southern Sinai caused substantial damage to two five-star hotels and great discomfort to tourists. The owner of an American tourism company criticised the official response

"There was no electricity, no toilets, no running water in the kitchen electrical poles toppled and palm trees collapsed," said Tamma Ecker, whose "Journey of the Mind" tour group had just completed a successful cruise to Upper Egypt and were mulling off their holiday at Sharm El-Sheikh, reports Jill Kamel.

Following a heavy rainfall, the entire pool area and the ground floor of the Intercontinental Hotel were flooded "up to the knees," Ecker said. There was "no drainage, so the stench was ghastly" and the flooding of the emergency generator "caused water to pour through the air conditioning. The roof of the hotel next door collapsed and its clients were evacuated to our hotel," she added.

While hastening to give credit to the staff of the Intercontinental, Ecker put the blame squarely on the shoulders of "tourism and the government," saying that there was no infrastructure at Sharm to deal with emergencies. "There was no way to cry out for help. What happened to us was totally unforgivable. Planes could have been dispatched from Cairo but they were not. We were stranded in ghastly conditions. Roads were closed, flights were cancelled and then we heard that the airport was closed, so emergency flights to evacuate us couldn't land."

Lavishing praise on the hotel staff, Ecker said, "They did an incredible job. With no kitchen facilities and no running water, they set up umbrellas in the pouring rain and cooked barbecue style to feed the hotel guests along with those of the neighbouring ho-

tel. The hotel manager did everything he could, but what could he do? He was unsuccessful in his SOS call to Cairo to send planes to airlift the tourists."

Ecker, who regularly brings exclusive American tour groups on educational cruises to Upper Egypt, regarded "the government's lack of ability to deal with the emergency as unforgivable. Every effort should have been made to evacuate the tourists, but nothing was done. I don't think anyone knows about the drama at Sharm and they should."

Ecker said she heard people talking about the lack of drainage in southern Sinai to cope with flash floods. "I understand it is not unusual at this time of the year, but since it happens to coincide with the peak tourist season there should have been some infrastructure to cope with emergencies," she said. She stressed that "lack of coordination between the government and EgyptAir" was also apparent, insisting that "aircraft could have been sent in to evacuate us."

Ecker's criticism was rejected by officials at the Ministry of Tourism and EgyptAir, who said the unfortunate situation was the result of a natural disaster and not the government's fault. "What happened was a natural catastrophe for which neither the government nor the hotel is responsible," Hussein Badran, under-secretary at the ministry, told Sherine Nasr.

The Intercontinental hotel was particularly unfortunate because it is constructed on relatively lower ground than other hotels "and this is why damage was greater there," Badran said.

The ministry, he added, went on the alert, setting up an around-the-clock hot-line with hotels in Upper Egypt to provide whatever aid might be needed and also to receive complaints from tourists. "But because telephone lines were cut [with Sharm El-Sheikh], some might have found it difficult to contact the ministry," Badran said.

And yet the ministry kept a close watch on the situation at Sharm. "We asked the authorities at Sharm El-Sheikh airport to provide the waiting passengers with hot meals and asked travel agencies to adjust their programmes so as not to receive more tourists in the affected area," Badran said.

The ministry later received assurances from Red Sea Governor Zahir Abdel-Rahman that the situation had returned to normal and holiday-makers were back on the beach, Badran added.

Talant Hegazi, head of EgyptAir's maintenance department, said the na-

tional carrier could not have sent in planes to evacuate the stranded tourists because the airports at Sharm and Hurghada were closed on Sunday and Monday. Runways were flooded and visibility was reduced to 100 metres. "This is not the fault of EgyptAir, simply bad weather," he said.

But Hegazi blamed travel agencies for bringing in more tourists while the flood continued.

Brewery goes private

In a continuing privatisation drive, a majority share in the nation's only beer manufacturer has been sold to a European-American group

The ministerial privatisation committee, under Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, last week approved the sale of the Cairo Sheraton Hotel as well as a majority share in the Al-Ahram Beverages Company (ABC), the manufacturer of Stella Beer, reports Gamal Essam El-Din. The two companies, which are subsidiaries of the Holding Company for Housing, Tourism and Cinema, are major items on the government's privatisation programme.

About 75 per cent of ABC's shares were sold to a group formed by seven European and American financial institutions for LE231 million — LE60 million higher than the value estimate made by the Central Auditing Agency.

Mustafa Eid, the holding company's chairman, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the buyers, who joined together to form the so-called Luxor Group, include ING Barings Securities Japan, Morgan Stanley in London and Fidelity International of the United States. Carlsberg-Tetley, the giant Danish brewer, will provide technical expertise.

Eid said the deal had been concluded with a share price of LE68.50 — LE12 higher than the stock market price. "This deal was far better and more profitable than the sale of Pepsi Cola and the Biscuits Company," he said.

According to Eid, the buyers are to trans-

fer the company's three factories in Giza, Alexandria and Sharmaya governorates to the new industrial cities of 10th of Ramadan and 6th of October. They also pledged to retain the company's 3,600 employees and spend as much as LE221 million to renovate the brewing equipment.

ABC was first put up for sale in the summer of 1994, but negotiations with interested buyers fell through. Last June, 30 per cent — or 1,350 million — of the company's shares were put up for public subscription on the stock market. But only 25 per cent were sold, for LE76 million.

ABC has a paid-up capital of LE90 million in the form of 4.5 million shares. It was first established in 1897 as a private beer producer under licence from the Dutch Heineken company and was nationalised in 1963.

ABC bottles beer under the Stella brand name and produces two non-alcoholic beverages — Birell and Fayrouz. It showed a LE14 million profit last fiscal year.

The Cairo Sheraton Hotel, which is owned by the Egyptian General Company for Tourism and Hotels (EGOTH), is one of 38 hotels and tourist villages on the privatisation list approved by the cabinet last February. It was sold to a joint Egyptian-Libyan group for LE50 million.

The sale of ABC was welcomed by economic experts. Ahmed Abu Ismail, an independent member of parliament and a for-

mer finance minister, told the *Weekly* that the government's success in selling ABC proves that the government is serious about privatising the economy.

"I think that ABC's sale deal should prompt the government to focus on selling companies to 'strategic' investors, instead of putting up shares for sale on the stock market," Abu Ismail said.

He said the sale of a number of public sector companies on the stock market last summer turned out to be "mere trading in shares," when the companies concerned should have been sold to investors interested in raising their productive capacity. "I hope this major privatisation step will soon be followed by others and that Egypt will go into the next century without a public sector," Abu Ismail said.

He objected, however, to the sale of the Sheraton Hotel. "Although I praise the privatisation of public companies, I strongly object to privatising hotels," Abu Ismail said. He argued that hotels, particularly those overlooking the Nile, should be retained by the state because their value is increasing all the time. "This is the reason Arab investors are focusing on the purchase of hotels: their profits are tempting and their real estate prices are astronomical," he said.

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

Cairo International Population Conference
"Under the auspices of H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak"
8-12 December 1996

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The changing face of MENA

The third regional economic conference widened the scope of regional integration beyond Arab-Israeli cooperation, writes Samia Nikrumah

The 3rd Middle East/North Africa Economic Conference (MENA III) held in Cairo last week represented a departure from the previous two summits. This time round, political pressure was brought to bear on Israel, rather than on the participating Arab states. There was no re-iteration over the pace of Israel's integration into the region, either. Officials from the high-level delegations of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Palestine and Europe spoke in the same language, reiterating their conviction that without a comprehensive and just peace economic integration will continue to suffer.

This view prevailed in the Cairo Declaration issued at the end of the conference, and essentially backed the principle of land-for-peace by expressing a "commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the terms of the Madrid Peace Conference, established by UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338." Stopping short of blaming Israel for the crippled Palestinian economy, the declaration called for the removal of "restrictive measures and closures" to "prevent the decline of and contribute positively to the performance of the Palestinian economy."

The events leading up to the conference set the tone. A few weeks previously,

Egyptian officials made it known that they considered postponing or even cancelling the event due to Arab intransigence with the Israeli government's intransigence in peace negotiations. Having finally announced that MENA III would take place on schedule, the Egyptian government decided to break with precedents by making it clear that regional integration is possible with or without Israel. As one businessman put it, the Cairo conference was about contacts and deals but not necessarily with Israel.

During the three-day conference, energies focused on clinching foreign investment agreements, with Egypt managing to secure deals worth \$10 billion, according to official figures. Most preliminary business accords announced in Cairo were between Western and Middle Eastern companies, making MENA III more of a world economic gathering than a venue for commercial activities between Arabs and Israelis.

In the absence of political support, there was a conspicuous lack of new Arab-Israeli mega-schemes. Preliminary agreements between the Israeli and Arab governments proposed last year at MENA II were postponed, shelved or cancelled. No longer is Qatar committed to supplying Israel with 2 million tons of liquefied natural gas under the memorandum of understand-

standing (MOU) signed between the American-owned Enron Development Corporation and Israel last year.

This year, the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation, Amoco Egypt Oil Company — a subsidiary of the American Amoco Corporation — and Turkey's Botas Petroleum Pipeline Corporation signed a \$2.4 billion MOU to export Egyptian liquefied gas to Turkey. The earlier proposal to build a pipeline to supply Israel with Egyptian natural gas has not materialised.

The regional institutions that stole the limelight in Amman last year took a back seat in Cairo. The charter of the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association is yet to be ratified by Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The Middle East Development Bank has not received the seal of approval from major Gulf countries. As for the Regional Business Council, "it is in a stalemate due to political issues," said Raouf Saad, Egyptian deputy assistant foreign minister. "Palestinian private businessmen boycotted the council in protest at the closures of the West Bank and Gaza," he added.

In another departure from previous summits, there was no inclination to put a glossy shine on the Middle East peace process at MENA III, at least on the Arab side. Dismissal of the policies of the Israeli government were vociferously

expressed by Arab officials. Palestinian anger was not kept under restraint. At one point, Israeli Finance Minister Dan Meridor was subjected to a trade of accusations from an Arab journalist. "Palestine, the Focus" was the emblem on the Palestinian stand at the conference's business centre, in reference to the importance MENA III attached to the need of addressing the deteriorating situation on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza.

Politics imposed itself on the conference's agenda. Queries on the delayed redeployment of Israeli troops in Hebron and Israel's attempt to release Aznan Aznan, the suspected Israeli spy arrested in Egypt recently, were made to every Israeli official.

In an interview with the *Financial Times* on the final day of the conference, President Mubarak said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu replaced an atmosphere of trust and confidence with a wall of suspicion and bitterness. In this state of mind, he said, it was very difficult to deal with the Israelis at the level of governments.

This is not to say that the Israeli business delegation was inactive at the conference. In fact, the Israelis were keen to emphasise that there was active dialogue between the Israeli and Arab business delegates. At the Israeli project presentation, a senior adviser

to the Israeli Minister of Agriculture, Samuel Puhovitsky, disclosed that 15 Egyptian private companies are working with Israel on agricultural projects. At the same time, the Israeli delegation adopted a low-profile approach. "We do not want to give names and upset our Arab partners." In essence, the Israelis had very little to show for their labour except previously-signed deals and on-going dialogue.

A number of Egyptian-Israeli business working groups are in the process of formation to monitor cooperation in different sectors of the economy. These will comprise businessmen from both countries and will be backed by a political committee to promote the peace process. However, Said El-Tawil, chairman of the Egyptian Businessmen's Association, noted that "this project has not yet been translated into action, and neither have members been selected."

"Governments cannot restrict private contacts," said one Egyptian Foreign Ministry official. Signed private joint Arab-Israeli ventures proceed despite political tensions. One such deal that received considerable attention was the \$1.25 billion Middle East Oil Refinery (Midref), a joint Egyptian-Israeli private venture signed over a year ago. The financing of the project was completed recently and work will begin at the end of the year. The Israeli partner, Yosef Maiman, commented that

political differences aside, in the past 17 years "Egypt has delivered all the oil it had pledged to Israel within the framework of the 1979 peace treaty between the two countries."

The Israeli presence is an established fact at the MENA gatherings. The Israeli Bank Hapoalim was among the nine partners funding the conference, who also included Egypt's Commercial International Bank and Ezz Group. Naturally, Hapoalim's contribution was solicited earlier in the year, before the Israeli elections. Facilitating later Arab cooperation to attract potential investors was another theme promoted by Arab officials, with Egypt managing to secure some modest deals with Gulf investors. It remains to be seen whether inter-Arab cooperation will become a hallmark of subsequent MENA conferences, given the continued lack of enthusiasm shown by major Gulf countries, coupled with the flight of Arab capital and skilled labour from the region.

The third economic conference may have featured fewer officials than businessmen compared to the previous two summits, but the circumstances surrounding the conference guaranteed that politics had a strong bearing on business. At the very least, the success of MENA III will not be measured by the extent of Arab-Israeli cooperation.

Business in the eye of the beholder

MENA III may have been about business, writes Niveen Wahish, but Egyptian and Israeli businessmen were of different minds about the impact of politics on the conference

Israeli businessmen who took part in MENA III may claim that it was business as usual during the event, but their Egyptian counterparts begged to differ. The Egyptians argued that the foundations for a sound business relationship cannot be laid so long as political tensions are high as a result of the unrest brought on in the Palestinian self-rule areas and the Occupied Territories by Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-line policies. Egyptian businessmen are, in short, reconsidering doing business with the same Israelis that they had turned to following the signing of the 1993 Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement.

According to Gad Sassower, chairman of Israel Shippers' Council, and owner of a freight-forwarding business, Israeli businessmen were very well received during the conference, despite the recent political tensions between the Arab world and Israel. And while he admitted that politics was a core issue during his talks with Egyptian businessmen, in the end, he noted, "business is business."

Sassower, who was visiting Egypt for the first time, said that by participating in the conference he was able to make numerous key Egyptian and Arab business contacts. Consequently, he expects that in the future, "many deals will come out of the contacts we have made during the conference."

Similarly, Mandy Barak, director of the Middle East Department in the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, said that contrary to his expectations, no one refused contact with the Israeli businessmen. Barak had brought with him about 1,500 brochures on business in Israel, and had expected to return with roughly half of them undistributed. But, to his surprise, they were all snapped up within the first two days of the conference. "This demonstrates the level of interest in doing business with Israel," he said.

Addressing the current political tension, Barak stressed his conviction that businessmen will eventually pressure politicians to resolve their differences. In the meantime, however, "business might go slower, but in the end, it will win," he said.

Barak's belief is mirrored by a well-informed Egyptian official, who is counting on the clout of businessmen to move the peace process forward. The source, who requested anonymity, said that Egypt's hopes hinge on Israeli businessmen pressuring their leadership to adopt a more moderate approach to peace, especially in light of the fact that since the talks reached an impasse with the Palestinians, trade between Egypt and Israel has declined. This trade slump, he argued, has not so much affected Egypt as it has angered Israeli businessmen who, as a result of Netanyahu's policies, "are sustaining a loss in profits which they will not tolerate for long."

Abdel-Rahman El-Sawy, president of System Engineering of Egypt, a computer technology firm, said that although his line of business affords him the chance to deal with any and all nationalities, in light of the present circumstances, he is holding back when it comes to dealing with Israel. He explained that his business is based on continuity, which does not involve providing only the technology, but also maintenance and spare parts. "We cannot guarantee this continuity with the unstable situation in Israel," he said.

While El-Sawy's company has not done any business with Israel, others have. Maged Rifat, chairman of Trans-Tech Engineering Company, is an Egyptian businessman who first began to wheel and deal with the Israelis following the signing of the Oslo Accords. "The peace agreement gave us the impression that the Middle East was going to be a stable place to do business," he said. His hopes, however, were short-lived and with the escalation in tension, "most of our business in the area is now on hold," said Rifat.

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A big piece of the pie

As the host of MENA III, Egypt captured the lion's share of the investment deals concluded throughout the 3-day conference. Shereen Abdel-Razek reports

Egypt concluded a record \$10 billion worth of investment deals during MENA III — a feat that underscored the nation's success in restoring international confidence in its economy.

Topping the list of major agreements was the \$2.4 billion memorandum of understanding signed with Turkey and the US's Amoco Corporation under which Turkey will be provided with 10 billion cubic metres of Egyptian liquefied natural gas annually starting in the year 2000. The significance of this deal was not its high value, but that it was totally unexpected.

Other Arabs, however, were not successful in concluding a significant number of deals. A Kuwait Development Fund grant of 18 million dinars for the rehabilitation of Egypt's sanitary drainage network was one of the biggest Egyptian-Arab agreements signed during the conference. Additionally, there was the \$130 million preliminary agreement that Egypt signed with several Gulf countries for a programme designed to boost trade between the two groups.

Europe on the other hand, was one of the conference's most active participants. Heavily represented by individual countries, the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB) sealed a large number of deals with both the Egyptian public and private sectors. The Italian government finalised a deal granting the Egyptian Federation of Industries \$250 million to upgrade Egyptian industries, particularly leather production. Moreover, Denmark concluded an agreement with Egyptian officials to build a control centre for its electricity network — an important infrastructure project that will cost approximately \$30 million.

EIB concluded a deal with the National Bank of Egypt for a pollution-control project. European private sector representatives were no less keen to engage in business with Egypt. Holger Schwenn, head of Messer Grieschen, a major German chemical company, said that his company has finalised a \$15 million agreement with Abu Qir Fertilizers (AQF) to purify and liquefy carbon dioxide emissions from AQF factories in Alexandria and utilise them in other industries. Schwenn said that he believes Egypt is a fertile investment ground.

The North American region was also active at MENA III, with the US delegation concluding a significant number of deals with Egypt. Ship Analytics company signed a contract with the Egyptian government and private sector partners to finance and supply environmental data to the early warning and navigation control system, which another American technology company, Lockheed Martin, is installing in the Gulf of Aqaba. Mostafa Sharaf, head of Lockheed's Middle East region marketing department, said the operation of the system is due to begin next January. "It is an environmentally friendly project which will protect marine life and coral reefs in an area where accidents result in millions of dollars in damage every year," Sharaf said.

The project is a \$3 million joint venture in which the Marine Transportation Ministry and the private Arab Academy for Technology and Marine Transportation represent the Egyptian side while Lockheed Martin and the government-controlled Trade Development Agency represent the American side.

Sharaf expressed his company's willingness to extend this project to include installing a similar system at the entrance of the Gulf of Suez. Luccent Technologies, a former subsidiary of AT&T, also signed a preliminary agreement to install 260,000 telephone lines in Egypt.

The Canadian government signed an agreement with Egypt aimed at protecting and promoting mutual investments. In the private sector, Zenon Environmental Systems company finalised an agreement with both the Ministry of Housing and New Urban Communities and the Ministry of Military Production (MMP). Martin Hauschild, a senior Zenon official, said that the agreement, which materialised after extended negotiations, will provide MMP with the technological facilities needed to produce water and waste water filtration systems in its factories. This technology will in turn be provided to the Ministry of Housing and New Urban Communities.

Hauschild said that after the conference, a Canadian trade mission would visit some of the participating countries in order to follow up on implementation of the concluded agreements. Aside from this long list of lucrative business agreements, MENA III witnessed the growing interest of major foreign companies in expanding their presence in Egypt. France's Banque Paribas has decided to re-open its Egyptian branch, and Microsoft, an American corporation, will open a regional representative office here, its first in an Arab country.

Additional reporting by Mona El-Hajj

Amman puts on the breaks

Jordanian officials at MENA III warned that Arab economic cooperation with Israel depends on progress in the peace process. Doaa El-Bey reviews the Jordanian position

At the start of MENA III, the head of the Jordanian delegation, Trade and Industry Minister Ali Abu Ragheb, openly warned Israel that there could be "no business without peace."

He emphasised that Israeli practices and attempts to delay the implementation of agreements signed with the Palestinians would impede Arab-Israeli economic cooperation.

Although the same warning was reiterated by other Arab states, the Jordanian warning was especially significant. Israel has considered Jordan as its closest friend in the region following the conclusion of the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement in October 1994.

Jordan, for its part, remains enthusiastic about economic links with Israel — if the peace process gets back on track. Jordanian Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf does not go along with the often-repeated line that "what has been promoted as economic cooperation with Israel is to the benefit of Israel alone."

On the contrary, she argues that economic cooperation with Israel, with its large and solid economy, vast technological base and good marketing network, could be of great benefit to Jordan. The priority for Jordan was how to take advantage of these strong points, she added.

However, she acknowledged that in the absence of a suitable political environment

in the region, such cooperation was bound to be hampered, and that levels of economic interaction could not be based solely on the potential economic rewards.

"The political prerequisites have to be in place for such cooperation to yield fruits for all participants and for us to be able to foster such cooperation," she told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Khalaf remains optimistic about the peace process. "Every country in the region, irrespective of the economic might of that country, will realise that peace is the only viable option," she said. "It may be a difficult process, it may go through some setbacks, but the realisation will come and there will be peace."

She was also positive about the importance of the Cairo conference to the region's future, viewing it as a continuation of the Casablanca and Amman meetings, although each has had a different political and economic message according to the circumstances prevailing at the time. "Casablanca followed a political breakthrough. Amman was the starting point for better economic cooperation between countries within the region and outside. It was a forum where each country was telling the world that it is ready to do business," she said.

At the time of the Cairo conference, she continued, the peace process was passing through turbulent times. "But this has not

eroded the competitiveness of our environments as far as business is concerned, and I think international investors are still showing interest in the countries of our region, which is a healthy sign."

She described the conference's seminars and workshops as "excellent," because they allowed the public and private sectors to meet and exchange views. "As an official, I am always very pleased to listen to the private sector, to discover how they see our investment environment, what its shortcomings are, and whether there are any changes they would like to see," she said.

Delegates from the Jordanian private sector also expressed their opposition to cooperation with Israel in the current political situation. Taher El-Tajer, a senior member of Jordan's Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the preparatory committee for the MENA conference, said the Jordanian private sector was not in a frame of mind to consider joint ventures with the Israeli private sector in the current political situation. He claimed that Israel's intransigence had affected the economic climate of the region, and called on Israel to show a real interest in peace and abide by the signed agreements.

Nevertheless, the Jordanian business community was a busy meeting place for Jordanian and Israeli businessmen during the conference.



Regionalism with closures?

MENA III provided a forum for the Palestinians to remind the world that the Israeli closures have shut out any prospects for future prosperity, writes Doaa El-Bey

A majority of the Palestinian business community boycotted MENA III, but the 15 delegates who attended described the conference as fruitful because of the networking that took place between themselves and their Arab and non-Arab counterparts.

The conference gave the Palestinians the chance to present a list of projects that need to be implemented in Gaza and the West Bank and for which they are seeking financing. "We presented private as well as public sector projects. We believe that such projects will probably be attractive to some foreign companies interested in joint venture projects in Palestine," Palestinian Minister of Economy Masri told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The economic conference also served as a political forum for Palestinian officials to condemn publicly the Israeli closure of Gaza and the West Bank. Masri said: "It is a forum where we have been able to transmit the message to the world business community that sanctions and closures by Israel as well as the political impasse caused by the non-implementation of the terms of the agreement are not conducive to the success of the peace process. Nor are they conducive to regional business development."

He added that "the facts of the situation as they are being exposed to the world business community" will exert pressure on Israel to put an end to the policy of closure and force it to honour the agreements signed earlier with the Palestinians.

The Minister emphasised that free trade with the Israelis and the closure of the territories are incompatible. "Our lives have become dominated by the concept of security as advertised by the Israelis," Masri expressed his firm belief that no economy can "survive, develop or grow" under such conditions. He said that Palestinians are working on a convoy basis "where only a few trucks at a time are allowed to enter or exit from Palestinian territories."

In search of a solution to the current situation, he called for free access between Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt and having a port and an airport in Gaza. "We must be allowed

to trade freely and move freely to survive," he added.

Nabil Shaath, the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, told a press conference on the sidelines of the main conference that the Palestinians want to pressure Israel into abiding by the signed agreements. He considered "a farce" Israel's participation in the conference and Israeli demands for free trade with the Arabs and the lifting of the Arab boycott. "Meanwhile, Israel, in peacetime, is imposing a suffocating closure on the Palestinians," he said. He expressed hope that this conference would set clear conditions for Israel's integration into the economy of the region. "Israel has to be committed in substance and on the ground to the peace agreements and it must end the suffocating closure of Gaza and West Bank," he said.

Zohbi Al-Nashashibi, Palestinian Finance Minister, also blamed the high unemployment rate in Gaza and the West Bank on the Israeli closure of the Palestinian territories. Speaking at the plenary session on the first day of the conference, he stated that unemployment had reached 60 per cent in Gaza and 45 to 50 per cent in the West Bank.

He explained that Israel's attitude towards the peace accords is blocking regional cooperation. "The party that is hampering the peace process and delaying the implementation of the peace agreements is totally responsible for hindering regional cooperation."

The appeals of the Palestinian ministers did not fall on deaf ears as participants from other countries echoed the Palestinian appeals during the conference. The final communiqué of the conference calls for removing the restrictive measures and closures on the Palestinian territories. The communiqué also expresses the participants' unwavering commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference [which called for exchanging land for peace] and UN resolutions 242 and 338 [which called on Israel to withdraw from the Arab territories it occupied in 1967].

Lisez

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□ Nabil Chaath
à propos de la Conférence du Caire

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□ Projet national
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Cavafis encore et toujours

□ Enfance
Ma rue, ma patrie

Rédacteur en Chef
Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président
et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie



Five thousand officials, business people and media representatives attended MENA III in Cairo, mulling in the corridors of the Cairo International Conference Centre in search of lucrative deals

Mega dollars for the Americans

The Americans were impressed and encouraged, closing some of the biggest deals in MENA III, writes Nevine Khalil

On the first day of MENA III, US officials anticipated "an incredible performance" by the US delegation, which, second in size only to Egypt's, included 260 businessmen and representatives of 150 other companies. And, incredible, it was. Members of the US delegation walked away from the event with their signatures on a sizeable number of deals valued in billions of dollars. With the final conference participation figures now in, MENA III attracted 100 more US businessmen than did its predecessor in Amman last year. Moreover, deals were struck not only on the multinational corporate level, but also with small and medium-size enterprises.

Impressed by the turnout at MENA III, which exceeded that of the Casablanca and Amman conferences, US participants also headed the role played by the private sector and small and medium-size businesses, and were encouraged by the prospects of economic prosperity in the Middle East.

For Egypt specifically, and the other countries of the region in general, this is welcome and timely news. According to US officials, Congress no longer favours playing the role of a rich uncle who doles out aid to "friendly" countries. Therefore, with future economic gains hanging mainly on active trade relations with recipient countries, the American Business Centre was a beehive of activity. Roughly 450 matchmaking appointments were made at the office during MENA III.

The conference also afforded US businessmen the opportunity to witness first hand the economic reforms taking place in Egypt and throughout the region. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said that MENA conferences generate "contacts that can lead to commerce," a statement that proved to be true after the Amman summit when 60 of the

150 US companies participating returned to Jordan to take a second look or to sign contracts.

Christopher said that US businessmen attending MENA III did not come for "an excursion", but because "they think there is important business to be done." Christopher, on what is believed to be his last assignment to the Middle East as secretary of state, led the official US delegation. American businessmen saw more practical business sessions than in previous conferences, but they still wanted more break-out sessions related to individual industries and country spotlights. Although heavy-handed political participation was not required, Americans wanted to meet with economic ministers to be briefed on governmental plans and strategies.

John Spero, US undersecretary of state, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the US delegation to the conference was "very pleased" with MENA III. Spero cited the large turnout of 4,000 delegates as a plus for the conference, saying that MENA III "reaffirmed the importance of the private sector." She said that the US government is greatly interested in promoting private sector activity and dialogue among political and economic leaders in the region.

"We are interested in promoting peace," Spero said. "That is the ultimate objective here, and I think we made progress on all fronts." During a press conference on the last day, Spero noted that MENA III reached a level of "serious, nitty-gritty, business activity" that surpassed previous conferences. Citing President Hosni Mubarak's "historic statement" on the importance of the private sector for the future of the Egyptian and region's economy, she added that the Cairo conference had taken the process of regional cooperation and integration to a "new stage".

Progress made in the economic reforms undertaken by

the various governments in the region was recognised and commended by US businessmen who, for too long, were scared away from investing in the Middle East. "The private sector needs the right policy environment," Spero said, "so a prerequisite for sustained economic growth is that each country get its economic house in order."

One such initiative is the US-Egypt Partnership for Economic Development, which is headed by President Mubarak and President Clinton. The partnership, which seeks to highlight and implement economic reforms in Egypt, has to its credit the creation of the Presidents' Council, an advisory body to the presidents. The council is charged with suggesting a host of much-needed reforms aimed at "boosting economic relations between the two countries."

The council played a key role in MENA III, such as introducing a series of projects and putting on centre stage Egypt's success on the economic reform front. Ibrahim Kamel, head of the Egyptian side of the Presidents' Council, said that the large US contingent at MENA III was due to the fact that "we had to explain to them what is going on in Egypt."

Egypt, stated Kamel, "had a very impressive story to tell, and I hope we succeeded in telling it so people will begin to view Egypt as the best place for investment in the world." Kamel is optimistic, but judging by the response to the conference on the part of the US delegates and businessmen, the optimism is not without foundation. US Secretary of Commerce Mickey Kantor described Egypt as "a linchpin in the success of the region", while Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce Judith Barnett said that US companies "stood up and recognised Egypt's efforts at reforming its economy." "We had to turn our fax machines off and stop accepting applicants,"

she said, recalling the prolific number of US companies wanting to take part in MENA III. Barnett also said that the US private sector urged that the conference be held on time because the US believes that the Middle East "is a place for opportunity in the future."

Christopher asserted that business communities are "the constituency for peace" in the region, and have a responsibility to work with their governments "to wipe out the barriers, boycotts, prejudices and taboos that obstruct commerce and hold this region back."

Barnett agreed, noting that the conference "brought us that the business people may be the peacekeepers." Kantor described agreements between US businesses and Middle East organisations as "the nuts and bolts of the peace process."

The agreements, supported by the US government, are only some of the \$20 billion in projects in the Middle East for which US firms were competing. Contracts signed include a \$2.4 billion deal between Egypt, Turkey and the US oil giant, AMOCO, for the export of liquefied natural gas from Egypt to Turkey. Other deals involving Egypt and the US include a project with Eli Lilly and Company, which will invest up to \$22 million to build a new pharmaceutical manufacturing plant in 6th of October City. The plant is scheduled to be operational in 1998. Lucent Technologies signed a framework agreement with the Egyptian National Telecommunications Organization (ARENETO), under which Lucent will cooperate in expanding Egypt's telecommunications network to increase the number of telephone lines in Egypt by 260,000. This project is the first phase of Egypt's five-year, five million line expansion plan.

In the Palestinian territories, US projects included one by California State University, Stanislaus Campus, which signed an agreement providing

consultative services for the establishment of an Arab-American university in Jenin; and the \$1.5 million Holy Med project, which will be the first state-of-the-art medical diagnostic centre in Gaza.

The US Trade and Development Agency (ITA) also signed a grant agreement with Jordan, whereby \$250,000 in funding will be available for a \$7 million spectrum of management study. The study, and eventual spectrum management programme, will assist Jordan increase the availability and reliability of its telephone service. Other agreements included one by the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which committed itself to \$200 million of political risk insurance for another new liquefied natural gas project in Oman. OPIC, a self-sustaining federal agency, has encouraged private sector investment in countries and areas important to US foreign policy.

Kantor said that the deals closed at MENA III by the Americans represent "the kind of interaction, growth and interdependence, and partnership" that is needed between the US and countries in the region. Spero said that "we put our money where our mouth is, and now our private sector [is] getting involved." She also extended the assurances of the US government and the private sector that they would be "active partners in encouraging a follow-up to the MENA conference."

Also in MENA III, Christopher announced that the US will sign the Middle East Development Bank's charter soon, and send representatives to the bank's transition team in Cairo later this month. The bank, expected to begin operation by the end of 1997, aims to be a catalyst in supporting private sector projects, promoting regional projects and dialogue and focusing on the region's growing infrastructure needs.

EU serious about the region



President Mubarak with Sir Brian Urwin

Gamal Nkrumah sums up EU's new spirit of enterprise

"Walk into any of the European countries' stands and you'll know they mean business," Ahmed Abul-Kheir, the Egyptian coordinator for MENA III, told me. I did. The German and Italian stands were impressive. The Europeans are serious about regional projects. They understand the concept of regional cooperation better than the Americans. The Upper Gulf of Aqaba Oil Spill Contingency Project between Egypt, Israel and Jordan, which is financed by the European Union, is an excellent example with sound environmental overtones. The EU is the foremost trading and financial partner of the Arab world and Israel.

The Europeans understand far better than the Americans that the state has a pivotal part to play in accelerating economic development. This European characteristic is something that Arab governments want to. "How can this region attract a greater and more evenly spread share of these private capital flows? For a start, governments have a vital role to play. They need to put in place stable macro-economic and supportive socio-economic frameworks to attract the investment capital needed, and to allow the private sector to play its part," said Sir Brian Urwin, the president of the European Investment Bank.

Governments also need "to establish a more efficient physical infrastructure base to help them enhance their international competitiveness, by eliminating physical and technological bottle-necks, by reducing transport costs, while

increasing the mobility of goods and workers," Urwin added.

"I'll let you into a little secret," Albert Maes, a former EU representative in Israel, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "We had very tough negotiations with the Israelis over terms of the Euro-Mediterranean agreement between the EU and Israel. The latter wanted the usual agricultural concessions. Israel wanted a special deal with public procurements and wanted a separate agreement with the EU over scientific and technical matters and intellectual property rights. They wanted to drop the term 'Euro-Mediterranean', presumably, so as to improve their chances of joining the EU at a later date. But the EU refused. We told the Israelis point blank that we do not consider them to be European. Israel is part of the Middle East. We will have to change the terms of the Treaty of Rome to accommodate the Israelis. We cannot do that. We cannot isolate Israel from its Arab neighbours," Maes, a seasoned Belgian diplomat, said.

The American attitude is that political problems, whatever they may be, arising from the hard-line anti-Arab policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can be dealt with. Europeans are more sensitive to even the subtle changes in the region. "There will be no peace without economic prosperity," Maes told the *Weekly*. "There will be no prosperity without close economic cooperation between Israel and its neighbours. That's the EU position."

Shotgun wedding

By Galal Amin



Egypt never wanted this marriage, but she was forced into it. Only a few weeks ago, she made another desperate attempt to resist, having seen with her very eyes the cruelty and utter brutishness of the person whom she was to wed. But she was abruptly told that the wedding is to take place — on time.

Everyone was to attend, the streets were to be re-paved and the broken lamp-posts mended and repainted. New colourful clothes were brought for Egypt so as to appear jolly and in perfect form. Everybody was invited from abroad, but only carefully selected guests from Egypt — those known not to object to the forced wedding. Some of these Egyptians (the politicians) pretended to be happy, but their hearts were heavy with guilt. The Egyptian and foreign businessmen who were invited, however, appeared to be genuinely happy, since they all looked forward to getting a slice of the fabulous wedding cake. This was, after all, all they cared about.

The ceremony was indeed lavish. A lot of money was spent, and more was promised. Everybody was trying to cheer Egypt up by pointing out the riches that await her, given that the groom is so well connected. With a very heavy heart, Egypt pretended to believe all this — that money could buy her what she hoped for. The wedding was declared a success, for indeed everything happened according to plan; no nasty surprise, no uninvited guest forced himself on the jolly guests, the catering was excellent, the musicians came on time and performed beautifully.

But everybody understood perfectly well what was happening. Its meaning was clear and our hearts were bleeding outside for the unhappy bride who was not even allowed to show her grief.

The writer is professor of economics at the American University in Cairo.

Thumbs up for MENA III

By Ahmed Abu Shady



Having been to many grand conventions as a journalist and, presently, as a staff member of the International Monetary Fund, I came to the recent Cairo economic conference with no great expectations. As one of two Egyptians on the powerful IMF delegation to the conference, I could even admit to some mild trepidation over the controversial views that preceded the meetings. But having been there, I could objectively declare the conference to have been a resounding success!

This personal view is based on four premises: First, a world-class representation of the finance and business communities' mightiest and richest left Egypt's competitors green with envy. Second, the Egyptian government's correctly low-profile presence allowed the business sector to shine at the conference. Third, the unassuming but efficient organisational team led by Ambassador Shoukry Fouad produced a go-off-free conference. Finally, the largely apolitical proceedings crowding the agenda were heavily attended, proving that participants sought this sort of business, and would like to have more of it.

This leads to my concluding point: what next? Far from being just another gaudy trade fair, these MENA conferences have evolved into the intellectually-weighted Cairo convention, catering to the information needs of business leaders and politicians everywhere, who are deeply interested in the future of the Middle East and North Africa.

Judging from the large numbers of participants who attended both the plenary and thematic sessions, there is a clear demand for up-to-date information on regional topics of interest. These include the economic outlook, sectoral developments, including banking, and sharing in the hands-on experience of the business leaders active in the region.

Certainly the involvement in the Geneva-based World Economic Forum and the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations has, and could further, deepen the intellectual content of these conventions. Only such an intellectually challenging core, not the much heralded business deals, could attract a similarly impressive crowd to the 1997 meeting in Doha, Qatar, and in several years time back to Cairo.

The writer is the IMF press spokesman for Africa and the Middle East.

Promising twins

Niveen Wahish and Mona El-Fiqi look at two budding regional institutions

Delegates at MENA III last week were hopeful that the Middle East Development Bank (MEDB) and the Middle East Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association (MEMTTA) will soon become a reality.

Elsawy El-Zayat, chairman and chief executive officer of Eneco Travel, Egypt, said he expects MEMTTA to be registered soon, since the agreement to establish the association is ratified by Egypt and the Palestinian Authority. The Egyptian parliament reconvened two weeks ago after its annual recess.

Mohamed Shateh, director-general of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction, explained that what remained to be done at his end was "just a matter of bureaucracy." The Palestinians have only had a legislative council since the beginning of this year and they had more important things to attend to, he explained.

MEMTTA has run into problems because of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-line anti-Arab policies. Egyptian and Palestinian delegates recently walked out of a MEMTTA meeting in Tunis in protest of Netanyahu's decision to open a controversial tunnel near Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. In addition, clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the self-rule areas and Occupied Territories have scared tourists away from the region.

According to El-Zayat, the association will play a crucial role in attracting investment to the region. Investors will be

encouraged to pour money into the area once they feel that more tourists will come, he added.

Many believe that MEMTTA's trials are over and that its future is assured. Lefkos Phylactides, representative of MEMTTA's interim board of governors in Cyprus, said that the prime objective of MEMTTA is to market regional destinations effectively. He explained that the association wants to find a corporate brand image which will promote the uniqueness of the region and stress that the area is safe to travel to.

MEMTTA has been designed to bring together governments and private sectors in an effort to unlock the region's exceptional tourism potential. "It is not just a marketing organisation, but will also work towards establishing a common market for travel services," said Phylactides.

According to El-Zayat, each member government will be represented by one individual. The percentage of MEMTTA's finances provided by the participating governments is minimal, since they have been unwilling to contribute, he said. The association is being bankrolled mostly by private-sector contributions, allowing it to be more independent.

Shateh said that the job of the government representatives will be to provide every possible facility to help the association grow. He added that he hopes the political situation in the region will soon improve. "There is a direct link between

regional cooperation in any sector and the current conditions on the ground," he said.

The US-inspired Middle East Development Bank (MEDB) is being set up to invest in economic development in the region in tandem with the private sector and was officially announced at last year's MENA II summit in Amman.

During MENA III, Raouf Saad, deputy assistant foreign minister for regional economic cooperation and head of the Egyptian negotiating team, announced that the US Congress had agreed to contribute an average of \$52 million annually to the bank for five years. The bank has capital of \$5 billion.

The bank has 19 founder members, and other countries, including China, are expected to be admitted soon. Saad said that the aim of the MEDB is to help in financing infrastructure projects and regional institutions. It will also provide information about the markets in the region in the whole world. "The MEDB, which will begin operation in 1997, will be a major tool for generating resources for projects, since public financing will not be enough to support the whole region," Saad said.

Larry Butcher, director of the Office of Development Finance in the US State Department, said, "The role of the MEDB will never be duplicated by that of other world institutions such as the World Bank because the MEDB will fill the gap in financing and supporting privatisation and regional institutions."

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Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

"... He was a sturdy, corpulent figure, a broad-chested man, of impressive girth and stature. He had a broad forehead and a thick white beard. There was no glint in his eyes, no definite set to the features of his face that is characteristic of the leaders of political parties and men of strong ambitions. Yet, there was a tautness and gravity. He is now over 61 years old. He has 17 children, eight of whom were born in Egypt and the rest in exile, and they speak Arabic, English and Sinhalese, which is a branch of Sanskrit, written in the alphabet of that language and spoken by the people of Ceylon."

The above passage is an excerpt from a lengthy description written by *Al-Ahram's* correspondent, Yusef El-Khazn, who stood among those who had gathered at the Cairo train station on 30 September 1901 to receive Ahmed Orabi, the famous nationalist and revolutionary leader, upon his return to Egypt after 19 years of exile in Ceylon.

Ahmed Orabi was the only leader in the history of the Egyptian nationalist movement to have provoked perhaps greater controversy over the end of his days than over the beginning of his career. In this, he stands out in marked contrast to Egypt's other great nationalist figures: Mostafa Kamel, Saad Zaghlul and Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

When Mostafa Kamel died in his prime, at the age of 34, the entire mass of the Egyptian population turned out to bid him farewell. Saad Zaghlul's funeral in 1927 was transformed into a mass demonstration. Even though he was over 70 when he died, his place in the hearts of the Egyptian people as the leader of the largest popular rebellion against the British occupation rendered such a passionate and wide-scale commemoration inevitable. When Gamal Abdel-Nasser died in 1970, every Egyptian household went into mourning. It was one of the rare occasions when the Egyptian people felt orphaned by the death of one of their national leaders.

Orabi was the only national figure not to receive such honours. Indeed, his very return to Egypt caused controversy.

An examination of the history of the European colonialist movement that reached its zenith during the last quarter of the 19th century and the early part of the present century yields two courses the imperial powers followed in dealing with the leaders of nationalist movements who spearheaded popular resistance against colonial penetration and who fell victims to the colonial authorities. The first was to make examples of the captured leaders, by subjecting them to torture followed by public execution. The method was intended to strike fear into the

hearts of their followers and intimidate them into submission. The Latin nations — the French and Italians — were generally more inclined to this method.

The second course was to inflict a slow death by psychological suffocation. This was the method most preferred by those powers reluctant to create national martyrs whose martyrdom would fire the spirit of popular resistance. Such was the strategy of the "empire upon which the sun never set" — Great Britain — and it claimed among its most prominent victims the leaders of the national movement of 1882, foremost among whom was Ahmed Orabi himself.

The strategy was first put into effect with the fall of Cairo to the British on 13 September 1882. While it was the desire of the Khedive and his camp to hang Ahmed Orabi as a warning against future insurrections, the British intervened on humanitarian grounds. The deal they concluded with the palace brought about the exile of Ahmed Orabi and other principal leaders of the nationalist movement to one of the islands under the British crown — Ceylon, with the caveat "If Orabi returns to Egypt he will not be pardoned. He will be executed."

Although Orabi did not succumb to idleness in Ceylon, the lengthy exile, discord among the group, the deteriorating health of many of them in a climate they were unaccustomed to, causing some to die and others to become blind combined to render their situation intolerably bleak and their homesickness all the more acute. This was all the more so for a man such as Orabi who had tasted the exultation of leadership and national adulation. These sentiments were expressed in a letter by one of the exiled leaders to their British defence lawyer Mr. Broadley: "I assure you that the four years which have passed since our departure from Cairo have passed as though they were a thousand years."

Perhaps this explains why Orabi made persistent appeals to various British authorities to pardon him and permit him to return home. Although his campaigns for remission would ultimately succeed, it came at the expense of his historic stature.

It was on 20 June 1887 that he launched his first attempt in the form of a petition to Queen Victoria on the occasion of her 50th anniversary on the throne. He wrote, "We ask, with all humility, to be included in your gracious compassion and we pray humbly to God from the depths of our heart to prolong your great and far-reaching reign." The petition was to no avail, but it left a bitter taste among the Egyptians. More important was the petition he submitted to the British crown prince upon his visit to Ceylon in April 1901. It was through these aus-

156 Ahmed Orabi was the first in a long line of nationalist leaders who fought against the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. Orabi's rebellion won popular acclaim but his homecoming in 1901 after 19 years of exile in Ceylon got a lukewarm reception. His return touched off a controversy, with detractors lambasting him for seeking British help to end his exile. In this instalment of his *Diwan* series, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizq** gives a graphic picture of Orabi's return home and the national debate that followed

pieces that he was able to obtain the khedive's pardon the following month and permission to return to Egypt.

Even prior to this, however, there had been signs of a tendency to pardon the Orabi supporters. For the British, the Orabis no longer represented a threat to the British presence which had managed over two decades to secure itself on Egyptian soil. Meanwhile, this same period had given rise to a new Egyptian nationalist movement led by the graduates of the Royal College of Law such as Mostafa Kamel, Mohamed Farid and Lutfi El-Sayed and others. This new class of Egyptian *effendis* had supplanted the Egyptian military officer class that had led the Orabi revolution.

In July 1896, Cairo was buzzing with rumours about the possibility of issuing a pardon for Orabi Pasha and permitting him to return to the country.

It was another three years before the royal edict was promulgated granting pardon to Mahmoud Sami Pasha, which *Al-Ahram* took to be a sign that the royal pardon for the other exiled Orabis would be forthcoming. This indeed took place nearly two years later, on 25 May 1901.

It was clear from the outset that the British were behind the royal pardon. Shortly afterwards, the British foreign secretary announced in the House of Lords that he did not know whether the khedive consented to Orabi's return "out of necessity or under duress." Also, Orabi sent three letters of thanks for his pardon. The first was addressed to the khedive, the second to King Edward VII and the third to the British government.

No sooner had he received his pardon than the Egyptian leader made preparations to re-introduce himself to the Egyptian people.

The method he chose for this was to publish his memoirs which ultimately appeared in *Al-Hilal* magazine beginning in mid-October 1901.

In Orabi's words we follow the story of his return voyage to Egypt in the company of his family, which consisted of more than 20 members. "We boarded the German steamer on Tuesday afternoon 17 September. The boat did not sail that day, however, and we spent the night in the port. The following day, we left the port of Colombo bound for Aden, where we arrived at nightfall. We only remained in Aden for a few hours of the following day, but we did not go ashore. Some dignitaries and officers of the area boarded the steamer to offer their greetings. Afterwards we set off directly for Suez where we arrived last Saturday (28 September) and where the crew of the steamship displayed all reverence and respect as they hoisted the Egyptian flag the moment we entered the port."

Under the headline, "Orabi in Suez" *Al-Ahram's* correspondent from Suez reports his interview with Orabi at the port. In what was perhaps his first such meeting with the press, Orabi spoke of his doings in exile. He built three schools there which he would visit every day. There was not a single tourist who arrived in Kandy whom he did not invite to his home. He then commented, "I praise God to see that my country has been relieved of tyranny. I have spent 18 years in exile with my family. But I see that my suffering has produced relief for 10 million people."

On the railway platform in Cairo another *Al-Ahram* correspondent awaited Orabi's arrival with other journalists "and a crowd of spectators and a regiment of the Royal police corps." When the train arrived, "a curious silence overcame us as we craned our necks to determine which carriage the former exile was in." When they detected the carriage, they rushed up to it and crowded around Orabi boarded a carriage belonging to the Hotel Bristol. The carriage was drawn by two white horses decorated in red ribbons." The correspondent, who followed

the carriage for a short distance, remarked upon how only a few people greeted the passing carriage. "No wonder," he commented, "for people were used to seeing Orabi in a touch less modest procession than this, when the streets he would pass through were so crowded as to be virtually impassable and the buildings would rock from the sound of clapping and exultation."

The torpor of this reception would have its bearings on the heels of the man's return.

It was not enough for the homebound leader to express his gratitude to the British upon learning of the decision to pardon him. On the day of his departure from Ceylon, amidst a group of Muslims who turned out to bid him farewell as he was preparing to board the boat that would take him back to his country, he delivered a speech in which he praised the occupation. Then, upon his return to Suez, in an interview with *Al-Muqattam*, known for its pro-British bias, he said, "From those whom I fought and engaged in battle, I only met with honourable treatment, and for this they merit my gratitude and respect. They saved me from execution and when I became alone and destitute, many of them contributed money to help me." Later in the interview he expressed his hopes that the khedive would permit him to travel to England "so that I can convey my gratitude to His Majesty the King of England and His Royal Highness the crown prince for the kindness they have bestowed upon me."

The statements provoked the national press, notably *Mustafa Kamel's Al-Liwa'*, to open fire on the man. Not only did *Mustafa Kamel* attack Orabi's desire to visit the British monarch, but he also alleged that he had fled from the battle of Tel Al-Kebir. "Orabi is not the courageous and valiant soldier in the field of battle as one might imagine. In fact, he had not received the slightest injury before he fled."

Al-Mu'ayyid also took part in the anti-Orabi campaign, leading one to suspect that it met with the approval of the khedive, if it was not actually at his indirect instigation. By no means could Abbas have been pleased by British pressures to secure Orabi's return nor by Orabi's statements in praise of the occupation.

A statement made by one of Orabi's sons to *Al-Ahram* added oil to the fire. In his response to what was published in *Al-Muqattam* and *Al-Mu'ayyid*, he said that *Mustafa Kamel* had frequently corresponded with his father while in exile, seeking his advice on many matters. "We still have these letters in our possession, although we would not like to disclose them," he added.

However, as attacks against Orabi grew more vociferous, the family did decide to release the letters and *Al-Muqattam* was only too willing to publish them. As that only too willing to publish them, *Mustafa Kamel's* newspaper noted, *Mustafa Kamel's* letters to Orabi were full of praise and admiration. Of all the newspapers of the time, *Al-Ahram* was the least biased in its position with regard to the return of the former nationalist leader.

In its edition of 1 October 1901 *Al-Ahram* attempted to describe the general climate that greeted the leader upon his return from exile. Under the heading "Orabi, too" it said: "No sooner had the man set foot in Suez than he was beset by lengthy newspaper articles attributing to him everything that has occurred in this country to recent times. Some considered this period to have brought nothing but evil to Egypt and have scorched him with brands of iron and lashed him with whips to the point of exhaustion. As for the other camp, they consider this period to have brought nothing but good and the showered the homecoming with praise and hearty welcome."

In face of these two extremes, *Al-Ahram* attempted to place the issue in its proper perspective. "All that remains of this man is his name, a name that evokes the memory of events past which are now the property of history and history will render them clear and enable us to discern the good from the bad."

Yet, as Orabi's return was developing into an increasingly heated political issue, *Al-Ahram* was compelled to contribute its opinion. It criticised the one-sided viewpoints voiced in the other newspapers. Orabi points were the minimum cause and the obvious pretext for the British occupation of Egypt. "Beyond him there were more fundamental causes and deeper reasons," which the newspaper proceeded to list. These were the weakness of the government at that time, its reluctance to institute reforms that justice and good politics required, the pervasive spirit of discontent among Egyptians for what they suffered at the hands of their government, particularly after Ismail's extravagance and despotism, and the dire consequences of heavy debts and corvée labour. Then, too, there were the territorial aspirations of the European powers and the intrigues of their politicians.

The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram* History Studies Centre.



Submerged antiquities in Alexandria

DURING the past month, Alexandria has witnessed a remarkable archaeological event, the uncovering of a sunken Ptolemaic city dating back some 2000 years ago. The discovery, was brought to world attention by sea explorer Franck Goddio with financing by the German Hilti Foundation managed by the family of Martin Hilti.

After 6 years and nearly 2,000 dives, Franck and a team of divers were able to create a detailed geographical survey of the sunken area in Alexandria's Eastern Harbour, as well as delineate borders of the fabled city. Also discovered were relics belonging to Cleopatra's palace, a place that set the stage for many events between Cleopatra and Marc Antony, and Julius Caesar. Also discovered was a part of what scientists are calling the Palace of Antioch. The Temple of Poseidon, the location of the Antirrhodus Island, as well as portions of the old harbour, hundreds of pillars and statues, were also discovered.

Michael Hilti, chairman of the board of the

Hilti Foundation is also chairman of the board of Hilti AG, a company specialised in importing building materials, employing 11,200 employees and having reserves of 1 billion Swiss francs in 1995. Hilti said that this project is but one of many scientific, social and cultural projects around the world which the foundation supports. However, the foundation chooses a limited number of projects which will have the most beneficial effect on the chosen country.

This support comes to Egypt in light of the major role it plays in the international fields of culture and antiquities. The successful support given to the project is also due to the strong ties that bind Michael Hilti and Franck Goddio together, for the pair had worked together previously on a number of antiquity projects.

To conclude, it can be said that the project initiated by the Hilti Foundation in Alexandria represents an intensive international effort to bring new life to sunken antiquities the world over.

From Alexandria: Amal Al-Gayar

MONEY & BUSINESS



NBE participates in development projects

THE EGYPTIAN banking system has sustained its strategic objectives based on supporting the government policy designed to prompt private enterprises to participate in the construction of roads, airports, power plants through the system of BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer).

The National Bank of Egypt (NBE) took the initiative and participated in the implementation of the said projects pursuant to the aforementioned system (that permits the private sector to build, operate and make use of infrastructure projects for a definite period of time and to be transferred later to the government). In addition, the bank took the necessary measures for the establishment of the Egyptian Company for the Investment and Reconstruction, a joint Egyptian company constituted in accordance with Law No 230 of 1989 and its executive regulations. The company's authorised capital is LE50 million with an issued capital of LE1 million, of which NBE's quota accounts for 20

per cent.

The company's main purpose is as follows:

- Building, operating and managing in the field of housing and reconstruction, via preparing studies and designs to submit offers in domestic and international bids. Due attention is given to bids offered by the government in respect of the aforementioned fields on behalf of investors willing to manage the said projects.
- Concluding the preliminary agreements deemed necessary to guarantee the credibility of investors.
- Supervising, following up and marketing the establishment of the companies entitled to carry out the said projects.
- Carrying out similar business or any other activities that would assist in achieving purposes thereof whether in Egypt or abroad.

It is worth noting that the company will commence its work by submitting a tender offer to Marsa Alam airport project.

Alliance capital announces its intent to form new joint venture

ALLIANCE Capital Management LP, Egypt's Commercial International Investment Corp (CIIC), and the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) announced that they are in discussions concerning the formation of a company to be called Alliance Capital CIIC Investment Management Ltd, which would be a new international asset management company that intends to specialise in investing in Egypt.

Alliance Capital CIIC Investment Management Ltd will be an investment management firm formed outside Egypt that will be 60 per cent owned by Alliance Management LP, 30 per cent owned by CIIC (an affiliate of Egypt's largest private commercial bank, Commercial International Bank), and 10 per cent owned by NBE.

The firm plans to launch a Luxembourg-domiciled closed-end equity fund listed on the Luxembourg Stock Exchange which will invest primarily in privatised Egyptian companies. The fund will also have the ability to invest in small amounts of Egyptian debt securities and unlisted securities. Alliance Capital CIIC Investment Management Limited will be the investment manager for the fund.

"Over the last two years the Egyptian stock market has benefited tremendously from Egypt's rapid pace of privatisation and

market liberalisation, presenting investors now with the opportunity to invest in a regulated, diversified, dynamic market," said Frank Savaga, chairman of the Alliance Capital Management International. "1996 has seen almost triple the amount of privatisations in 1995, raising Egypt's total market capitalisation by over \$2 billion to 10 billion."

Commercial International Investment Corp (CIIC) is Egypt's largest investment management firm with unique expertise in corporate finance, privatisation, and international capital market operations. CIIC is 28.5 per cent owned by Commercial International Bank (CIB).

NBE is the largest public sector bank in Egypt. The firm owns 20 per cent of CIB. Alliance Capital Management LP is a leading global investment adviser based in New York with approximately \$174 billion in assets under management. Alliance Capital provides investment management services to institutions, pension funds and endowment banks, insurance companies, as well as the firm's large family of open and closed-end mutual funds. Alliance Capital is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Equitable Companies Incorporated (ECI), with approximately 57 per cent of Alliance's outstanding units beneficially owned by ECI.

Capitalising on used lubricants

AFTER being used for sometime in engines and machines, lubricants need to be replaced by new ones. In major industrial countries, used lubricants are refined to regain the quality of newly-produced lubricants.

Hamdi Abul-Naga, technical affairs manager of Misr Petroleum Co, said that in these countries the ratio of refined used lubricant makes up 25.6 percent of all lubricants production. He added that Egyptian consumption of lubricants is estimated at 320,000 tons annually. If 25 per cent of this volume is refined, the domestic production of lubricants, can potentially reach 192,000 tons annually.

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فكرنا من الأصل

Ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem

Creeping, Arab East Jerusalem is being 'ethnically cleansed' of its Palestinian population, writes **Graham Usher** from the Israeli-annexed city



A Palestinian police cadet rolls as an armed Palestinian trainer faces a shot into the sand from his AK-47 during a five fire drill in a training base south of Hebron Monday (photo: Reuters)

With agreement on the Israeli army's redeployment in Hebron seemingly further away than ever, recent events have focused attention on the West Bank's other divided city — the Palestinians' putative capital of East Jerusalem.

On 7 November, a small blast went off outside Israel's Interior Ministry offices in East Jerusalem, injuring four, one seriously. Since the ministry is where East Jerusalem's 160,000 or so Palestinian "residents" have to go to receive their permits, the suspicion is that the explosive was placed by an extremist Jewish group. For Palestinians, the "bomb" is an apt metaphor for the overall mood in the city.

Three days after the explosion, around 50 Palestinians staged a sit-down protest outside the Interior Ministry. They were demonstrating not so much about the blast as over Israeli administrative actions which, in the view of the PLO's representative in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini — aim to "drive Jerusalem's Palestinian residents out of their city."

Following a meeting with Husseini on 12 November, Israel's interior security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, agreed there was a "real difference" in the services provided between (Jewish) West and (Arab) Jerusalem. His remedy was to support the pledges of Jerusalem's Likud-run municipality to build more government offices, classrooms and infrastructure in the east.

Neither the admission of "differ-

ence" in provision nor the pledges are likely to cut much ice with Palestinians, says Eitan Felner, deputy director of Israel's premier human rights organisation, B'tselem. Last year, a study carried out by B'tselem (and researched by Felner) concluded that, since Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Labour and Likud governments alike have adopted policies that "systematically discriminate against Palestinians" in East Jerusalem. The facts, says Felner, "speak for themselves".

They surely do. Of East Jerusalem's 70,000 dunams that Israel occupied in 1967, around 35 per cent has since been turned over to Jewish ownership. On this land, successive Jerusalem municipalities have built 38,500 housing units dispersed through several newly established Jewish settlements. But records B'tselem, during the 19 years of occupation the same land has had "not one housing unit" built for the Palestinians.

The result is that today Jews in East Jerusalem constitute a slight but clear majority, with 170,000 inhabitants, while its Palestinian residents have been reduced to the status of an impoverished ethnic minority. Due to Israeli "planning" restrictions in East Jerusalem, Palestinians are not allowed to build beyond the 10 per cent of East Jerusalem they currently live on or use, says former Jerusalem city councillor and Meretz member, Sam Kaminker. The consequence is a chronic

shortage of housing among Palestinians in East Jerusalem, with, he estimates, "120,000 living in sub-standard and over-crowded conditions".

Nor have the Madrid and Oslo peace processes improved matters. If anything, life has not only gotten worse, but more precarious. Many Palestinians are convinced that Israel is now undertaking policies aimed at reducing their number in East Jerusalem ahead of Oslo's final status negotiations, due to start once (and if) Oslo's interim phase is over.

Despite Israel's vowed annexation, Palestinians in East Jerusalem are not (nor do most desire to be) Israeli citizens. They are defined rather as "permanent residents of Israel". This means that should any one of them live outside Jerusalem for seven or more years or take foreign citizenship, he or she forfeits their residency status. To avoid this, Palestinians from East Jerusalem living or studying abroad have had to renew their exit permits every one or three years.

This used to be enough to save their residency. But not, it appears, any longer. Two years ago, Israel's Interior Ministry started to condition a Palestinian's residency status on whether his or her "centre of life" was in East Jerusalem i.e. on whether she/he lived, worked or went to school there. The result, says Israeli lawyer, Lea Tsemel, is "hundreds of cases of Palestinians from East Jerusalem who have been denied residency after being abroad, even though they have renewed their exit permits".

Even more alarming, she knows of cases of Palestinians denied residency because their "centre of life" is no longer in East Jerusalem but "outside" in the West Bank and Gaza. Should these latter cases be part of a general policy, then "we are talking of thousands of East Jerusalem's Palestinians losing their right. Tsemel remains sceptical. "Then why are all these cases of lost residency rights landing on my desk?" she asks. "Something has changed".

Such onslaughts have (belatedly) galvanised the PLO into action over East Jerusalem. But while actions like protests outside the Interior Ministry are necessary, more will be needed to resist Israel's creeping hold over East Jerusalem. In an interview in the Israeli magazine, *Challenging*, Sara Kaminker insists that political strategy as much as protest is what is now required.

"If Palestinians could get control of the land that is under Arab ownership" in Jerusalem, "they'd have 50,000 dunams to play with... If this is to be the capital of the Palestinian state, what will its connection be to other areas in the West Bank? These are all very serious issues that require a lot of thinking, creativity and research. I wish the process would begin, because that's a real sovereign function which the Palestinians could undertake today," says Kaminker.

A woman in the Arab League

The first woman to head her country's delegation to the Arab League, Libya's Salma Rashed, talks to **Dana El-Bay** about her new post

Salma Rashed, the permanent representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the Arab League and the first Arab woman to fill the post, boasts of her appointment two months ago as an expression of gender equality in Libya. "We do not deal with the sex of citizens but with their competence. We went beyond gender discrimination decades ago," she declared.

Her appointment must have created something of a ripple among the members of what hitherto has been an exclusively male club. According to Rashed, other heads of delegations cordially "welcomed her but could not conceal their surprise and even astonishment at my becoming the first woman representative to the Arab League."

Rashed is a 28-year-old, stout, self-confident woman. She graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science of Tripoli's Fatch University six years ago. She first worked as a lecturer at the same faculty. She then was appointed as a deputy secretary for women's affairs in the General People's Congress in 1992 and last year, she was moved to the General People's Committee for Unity, the body from

which diplomats are selected. She was appointed by the committee to head the Libyan delegation to the Arab League last August after she joined in the Libyan delegation to the Cairo summit last June.

Rashed's appointment came as part of a programme initiated by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to boost the status of the Libyan woman. Women in Libya have reached top posts in many fields, Rashed explained. "They are judges, secretary-generals of the General People's Committee, diplomats."

She officially started her job as Libya's representative when she presented her credentials to Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid last September, only one day before the opening of the Arab League's 106th session. This session, the first she attended, was described as one of the most productive.

In that session, the Arab foreign ministers issued a very strong — although not binding — statement in which they unanimously agreed on the urgency of putting pressure on Israel to honour the peace agreements it has signed. They threatened to reconsider the normal-

isation of Arab relations with Israel if it did not.

Rashed praised the Arab League and wondered why it has been considered ineffectual. In fact, she continued, the Arab League's effectiveness is dependent on the concerted behaviour of its member states. If the Arab states do not boost the role of the League by giving its resolutions credibility and respect, it cannot fulfil its mission. "The Arab League is a means and not an end. It is a means for the Arab states to achieve a unified stand," she said.

She described the atmosphere of understanding at the League as overwhelming since the Cairo summit in June. This is reflected in the member states' readiness to adopt a unified position on issues relating to security and stability in the region, she said.

Concerning the role of the Arab League in resolving the Lockerbie issue, Rashed said Lockerbie has become an Arab rather than a strictly Libyan issue. The resolution passed by the Cairo summit called for the lifting of the UN sanctions imposed on Libya. Rashed condemned "the resolutions of the Security Council, meaning America

Netanyahu under fire again

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's administration came under renewed fire this week as Arab and Western leaders called on the Likud government to honour its commitment to the faltering Middle East peace process. Qatari Foreign Minister, Khalid bin Ahmad Al-Fahd Al-Sabah, called on Israel on Monday to respect its commitment to hand over Hebron, and criticized the Netanyahu administration's decision to resume the expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories. This comes on the heels of the address by Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring to last week's Cairo MENA conference in which he reiterated European support for the land-for-peace formula rejected by hard-line Israeli right-wingers, and reflects the growing involvement sought by Europe in the peace process.

Under the 1995 Oslo accords on extending Palestinian self-rule, Israel pledged to withdraw its troops from 85 per cent of Hebron and turn civilian control of the entire city over to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority in March. The government of Netanyahu, elected premier in May, has consistently refused any form of redeployment until the Palestinians agree to certain changes in the Oslo plan. These changes are intended to improve security guarantees for the 400 Jewish settlers currently living among Hebron's 120,000 Arab residents. Six weeks of intensive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have so far failed to break the deadlock.

Israeli-Syrian row

YET ANOTHER row has broken out between Syria and Israel over the already ailing peace negotiations. Yitzhak Mordechai, Israel's defence minister, charged on Sunday that Syria was developing chemical weapons, in particular nerve gas, with the help of Russian scientists and warned that Israel would topple Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad if Damascus used chemical arms against it.

According to Mordechai, Syria possesses "Scud ballistic missiles capable of carrying non-conventional warheads and reaching major cities within Israel as well as the Israeli nuclear research centre in the Negev desert. Speaking on Israeli radio, Mordechai said, "If anyone gets the idea of using these weapons against us, they'd better know that Israel is ready for anything and will use all means at its disposal in response, putting the survival of the current regime at risk."

An enraged Syria retorted on Monday that Israeli threats of this sort should set alarm bells ringing throughout the Arab world. "The Arabs must seriously examine Mordechai's threats, because any aggression against Syria must be considered an aggression against all the Arabs," said the ruling party's *Al-Baath* newspaper.

Mordechai called on the Syrians to "return to the negotiating table so we can achieve peace."

US-brokered peace talks between the two antagonists were suspended in February by Israel's previous Labour government and have not yet been resumed under the Netanyahu administration. Under pressure from hard-liners in his party, Netanyahu has refused Syrian demands that the talks resume where they left off under Labour, with an agreement in principle that Israel will return the Golan Heights to Syria in return for full peace. Syria is accusing Israel of using "Israeli security" as a pretext for prolonging its occupation of Arab territories and reneging on its commitment to regional peace.

Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, proceeding to annex the highly strategic territory in 1981.

Will Europe come out of the shade?

The Middle East peace process affects the EU's vital interests, writes **Nassif Hitti**. Yet a single broker continues to run the show. Is Europe finally moving from the sidelines?

Diplomatic moves toward the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East are marked by three main characteristics, which have become increasingly clear in recent weeks. First among these are the Arab and Israeli diplomatic missions to European capitals. Arab diplomacy has been focused on sharing with Europe feelings of anxiety and scruples concerning the fate of the peace process, and to try and put the peace process back on track, pulling it out of the impasse created by the new Israeli government. On the other hand, Israeli moves led by both the prime minister and the foreign minister have aimed at improving the Likud's image in Europe, which is rightly accused of supporting the Labour Party. Israeli diplomacy has also been geared toward the launching of a diplomatic offensive to counter Arab actions in a bid to neutralise Europe.

European diplomatic moves in the region make up the second major component of recent diplomatic activity. The most prominent of these moves is the visit to the Middle East of the Irish foreign minister and the chairman of the European Ministerial Council during the first week of October, following authorisation by the unofficial European Union (EU) summit. These moves culminated with Jacques Chirac's visit.

The third factor affecting diplomatic exchanges is the most recent Arab-Israeli disagreement, instigated by the Arab request that the EU play a role in setting the peace process back on course. This request met with strong Israeli objections — made without the slightest knowledge of what this role could be.

This intensive, diversified diplomatic activity across the Mediterranean reflects growing European concern over the fate of the peace process. Europe has made abundantly clear its distress at the changes that have occurred since Netanyahu's accession to power, especially in view of the fact that the US supports Israel unconditionally, and given that the US does not hesitate to put aside its responsibilities, whether for internal reasons (elections) or during international crises, returning to the helm only when the situation reaches a crisis point.

The key European actors are convinced that they can effect changes in the Middle East, within recognised limits. The reorientation of the Arab attitude to Europe following the Cairo summit reflected a new political dynamism on the international level which will undoubtedly serve the peace process.

While both Arab and European governments may be persuaded of the central role played by Washington in the peace process, this does not imply that the US may veto the intervention of other actors, especially when this intervention is likely to step up the pace of the process and encourage the resumption of negotiations. Europe can hardly ignore its responsibilities toward an issue which will have a direct and multi-faceted impact on the security of the "old continent" should we return to the situation as it stood before Madrid.

The Arabs should not forfeit the European card, no matter how limited its effectiveness may prove to be, under the pretext that the US will object to European involvement. This pretext holds no water, especially in view of the fact that the US supports Israel unconditionally, and given that the US does not hesitate to put aside its responsibilities, whether for internal reasons (elections) or during international crises, returning to the helm only when the situation reaches a crisis point.

The key European actors are convinced that they can effect changes in the Middle East, within recognised limits. The reorientation of the Arab attitude to Europe following the Cairo summit reflected a new political dynamism on the international level which will undoubtedly serve the peace process.

Europe holds a number of aces, quite apart from its political weight, that could be played in bringing the European role to the fore. Among these is economic assistance: the EU has provided crucial assistance within the framework of peace, aimed at creating or supporting stability and encouraging cooperation and joint ventures. Economic relations are another ace in the EU pack: Israeli foreign trade with the EU has developed at remarkable rates. Israel has a vested interest in nurturing its partnership with the EU, bearing in mind that EU-Israeli agreement is the most advanced of similar EU partnership agreements, and includes key areas of scientific and technological cooperation.

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The writer is a professor of political science at the American University in Cairo.

Pakistani merry-go-round

Benazir Bhutto's dismissal from office this month was widely welcomed in Pakistan. But can the country look forward to anything rosier than more purges and coups d'état, asks **Eqbal Ahmad**

On 5 November, Pakistan's president dissolved Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government. This is the second time Benazir has been ousted by presidential decree on charges of corruption and mismanagement. In 1990, most citizens had sympathised with her. In 1996, they openly celebrated her ouster.

The contrast marks Benazir's passage from a once popular symbol of democracy to a widely detested politician. Therein lies her failure and Pakistan's misfortune. Since its birth in 1947, Pakistan's history has revolved around an unresolved tension between the people's yearning for democratic and reformist governance and the political elite's deep-seated antipathy to reform and democracy.

Politicians and soldiers have taken turns at governing Pakistan. They have had almost equal time and, barring differences in detail, their style of government has been remarkably similar. Both have grossly mismanaged the country's affairs while augmenting the size of government to irrational levels. Both have neglected such crucial tasks as promoting literacy, reducing population growth and raising educational standards. Both have resisted distributive justice and land reforms. And both have been corrupt and indulgent at public expense. So when the patience of the public starts to run out, the one out of power rides the wave of discontent to turn the tables on the other. This time around, the generals have stayed in the wings, but the play is a revamped oldie.

For three of Pakistan's five decades, the Bhuttos, a landed family from the province of Sind, have been at the centre of this depressingly repetitious drama. What distinguished them were the promises they came bearing, the hopes they aroused, and the disappointments they produced. In 1959, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was an obscure lawyer in Karachi when he sought and received the patronage of Pakistan's first military dictator. He served Ayub Khan first as minister of commerce, then as foreign minister. As the dictator's reign began to flag from popular discontent, the flamboyant Mr Bhutto abandoned ship and led the protest movement which forced Ayub Khan to retire.

The elections which Ayub's successor, General Yahya Khan, held in 1970 resulted in Bhutto's People's Party winning the majority vote in West Pakistan (present-day Pakistan). But Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League won an overwhelming victory in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), representing some 60 per cent of the then Pakistani electorate. Naturally, the sheikh and his Bengali followers expected him to be prime minister. But West Pakistan's oligarchy distrusted him and Mr Bhutto, wanting to be prime minister himself, refused to cooperate. Crisis ensued. East Pakistan declared its independence and Bhutto welcomed the start of military operations aimed at blocking the secession, saying, "Thank God, Pakistan has been saved." He supported the merciless and hopeless military campaign until December 1971, when Pakistan's army in the east surrendered to India, which had joined



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto



Murtaza Bhutto



Benazir, her children and husband Asif Zardari

the fighting in support of the separatists. Bangladesh was born. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto now headed Pakistan's government.

He was not corrupt in money matters. His regime was memorable for its arbitrary, rule-less and vindictive character. His "land reforms" reinforced landlordism. Sweeping nationalisation of industries and banks were popular measures, but they ruined Pakistan's nascent entrepreneurial class without yielding any of the benefits associated with socialism. The judiciary was tamed and the bureaucracy was moulded into an instrument of personal power. The army, weakened by the Bangladesh debacle, was fully rehabilitated and its powers to intervene in civil society were enhanced. Bhutto's mobilising promises of "bread, clothing, and shelter" were all but forgotten.

Pakistan under father Bhutto bore aspects of totalitarian rule. When the next elections were held in 1977, the tamed bureaucracy rigged them widely, apparently without Bhutto's explicit instructions. The opposition took to the streets and found surprising popular support against the rigging. Convinced of the loyalty of his hand-picked army chief, Bhutto ordered the army into four major cities. In July, General Mohamed Zia Ul-Haq usurped power effortlessly. Fearing Bhutto's charismatic populism, Zia incarcerated, tried and executed his benefactor on flimsy charges of murder. Bhutto's execution transformed him into an icon of opposition to military rule. Young Benazir's courageous and determined opposition to Zia's government made her the symbol of resistance. When she returned from exile in 1986, people gave her a hero's welcome. When Zia died in a mysterious air crash and free elections followed in 1988, she became prime minister — the first job she had ever held.

People sympathised with her in 1990. She was out before she could mature and handle the re-

sponsibilities of her high office and before she had learned to tame Asif Zardari, her polo-playing spouse who earned, within months of becoming Pakistan's first gentleman, a reputation for influence peddling and bribery. Moreover, the president who ousted her was associated with General Zia. His motives were suspect. In 1996 Benazir has no alibi. She was fully in charge, a seasoned politician with five years of experience as prime minister. Her government was dissolved by a president she had hand-picked from her own party. The caretaker prime minister, too, is a respected veteran of her party. Above all, citizens believe that the reasons given for her dismissal — corruption and mismanagement — are correct.

Like her father, Ms Bhutto has the talents of a populist politician; she is a flamboyant orator and talented communicator, with a keen sense of opportunity and an enormous will to power. She also possesses unfortunately the traits which defined Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's tragedy. Elite education has invested in her only the veneer of modernity: fluency in English, familiarity with contemporary ideas and rhetoric, the savoir-faire of the jet set. Under the surface lies the real Bhutto — an unyielding feudal woman from Larkana in southern Pakistan, more comfortable with cronies than with colleagues, in private audience more than in parliament, giving orders more than discussing policy, issuing decrees rather than legislating laws.

Like most scions of Pakistan's feudal class, Ms Bhutto has difficulty distinguishing between the private and public domains. Ownership in feudal society is quite a different matter from that in bourgeois society. It is absolute and the lord or lady sets the rules of how to run what they own: that's our land, those are our villages, our peasants, forest and fields, mosques and monuments. Distinction between what is private and what is public is com-

pletely blurred. Benazir likes to travel; so in three years she took some 50 trips abroad, all with large entourages and in the prime minister's luxurious private jet. Last June, an enterprising reporter found that several thousand pounds of household effects were transported by Pakistan International Airlines from the Bhutto home in Karachi to London, free of cost. That signalled the next in a series of scandals — a \$3.9 million estate outside London allegedly bought through intermediaries.

Benazir is less interested in money than power. But Mr Zardari, being more a real estate dealer than a feudal lord, had a different agenda and, given the absence in the prime minister's house of a distinction between the private and public, he had a free hand. Unfortunately for the couple, Pakistan has recently had a free and feisty press. They made disclosures one after another which the prime minister dismissed as mere rumours. In her moodily column last August, she recalled visiting the White House with her father and remembered how proudly former US President Richard Nixon told Henry Kissinger that "she is a fighter like me." She concluded that one must "fight for what one believes in, leaving rumours for rumour-mongers who have nothing better to do." Her government never accommodated public demands for a judicial commission on corruption. Instead, she appointed husband Zardari to the cabinet as minister for investment.

More serious than corruption were the growing crises of the economy and law and order. In 1996 she imposed new sales taxes which hurt ordinary citizens while rich land owners remained untaxed. Transparency International rated Pakistan's government as the second most corrupt after Nigeria. Investments declined. Moody lowered Pakistan's credit rating. The rupee has decreased in value by 15 per cent since January.

The economic crisis was compounded by the es-

calation of violence in Karachi. Pakistan's commercial capital. There, she chose to confront rather than compromise with the ethnic Urdu-speaking opposition party, Mohajir Qawmi Movement (MQM) — an armed organisation not averse to violence. In the conflict that ensued more than 2,000 persons were killed. Thousands were routinely incarcerated week after week as the government carried out search-and-destroy operations in urban neighbourhoods. Law was the worst casualty of this warfare as the police and militia units were allowed to do as they pleased. Torture became common, and hundreds of prisoners were killed — in custody and in fake "encounters" with forces of law and order. Public appeals for an inquiry into these killings were ignored.

On 20 September, Benazir's only surviving brother, who had turned into a virulent opponent of his sister and brother-in-law, was killed in one such "encounter". No one suspected Benazir's hand in her brother's death. I A Rahman, director of the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, wrote of the "Frankenstein that killed Murtaza Bhutto": "There is no doubt that the young Bhutto was killed in cold blood by a state apparatus that has gone berserk as a result of what the custodians of power themselves unabashedly describe as 'the free-hand policy'."

Pakistan's judiciary has a fair record of asserting independence at critical junctures. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did himself much harm by naming it. Benazir did not learn from his mistake. In her second term she made more than three dozen appointments to the high courts; most were embarrassingly unqualified party hacks. Lawyers and the press complained in vain. Last year, in response to a legal petition the Supreme Court disqualified 15 of her appointees. An ugly confrontation developed between her and the judiciary as the government harassed the judges and stalled on abiding by the court's decision. Ironically, she now sees the judiciary as her only hope. At her press conference on 6 November, she vowed to petition the court, saying, "If there is justice in this land, I shall not lose in the court."

Bhutto's dismissal has been welcomed by most Pakistanis with a sense of relief. Yet it raises troubling questions without relieving in any way Pakistan's grim predicament. There is uncertainty ahead. The president's case for dismissing the government and dissolving the parliament is not persuasive. Although Ms Bhutto has caused the judges much grief, the court may yet restore her government as it did a previous one three years ago. If it does not, fresh elections are required and promised by early February. They can yield no more than a turn on the merry-go-round, an outcome the president and the army's leaders will find distasteful. So speculations abound about electoral postponement, impending purges and — worse — another coup d'état. Democracy, after all, cannot long survive without democrats. There is only one certainty in all this: the failures of another Bhutto have unhinged the country one more time.

Turquoise tusk?

Operation Phoenix Tusk promises to resolve Africa's problems. Why were Africans not consulted, asks **Gamal Nkrumah**

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I have been asked one question more frequently than any other in recent weeks: "What on earth is happening in eastern Zaire?" Not that I am particularly dexterous in deciphering the dilemmas of the African Great Lakes region. One doesn't have to be especially expert at reading between the lines of international front pages to realise that the West considers the goings-on in the region a matter of no small importance. One of the ironies of the global information revolution is that sometimes the more information you have at your fingertips, the more confusing the reports read. Why does the international media continue to define the conflict in the African Great Lakes region in ethnic and tribal terms?

One thing is clear: former colonial powers, such as France, with a vested interest in the region have been marginalised. Countries, like Canada, with little African experience have been asked to take the lead in establishing a semblance of peace. African governments and the refugees have been sidelined altogether. But the refugees have decided to express their will by fleeing eastern Zaire in an unprecedented mass exodus.

People in the know, too, are being sidelined. One such character is Jacques Foccart, an old hand of the French Foreign Ministry — a man they call the "witch doctor" because he has concocted France's Africa policy over the last three decades. And others with hardly any experience in the region are called to help clean the mess. Take Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril, the Canadian commander-designate of the multinational force code-named Operation Phoenix Tusk, for one. After a stopover in Cairo, Baril was in the Rwandan capital Kigali on Monday to evaluate the situation in the Great Lakes region. Today he is presiding over a military planning meeting in Stuttgart which will decide the international task force's role in eastern Zaire. Why Baril is still insisting on heading the international mission when over half a million refugees have already returned to Rwanda beats me. It seems the same question bothers Laurent-Désiré Kabila, leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

Between Western and African perceptions of the problem a divide yawns. Kabila warned that the international force appeared to be "ill-intentioned". It is no secret that France has gone on a war footing. Kabila noted that French troops are today stationed 500km away from the battle scenes of eastern Zaire in the Congo River port city of Kinshasa and are "in the process of re-organising Zairean armed forces."

Paris is in the grip of the political imperative. Her hands are up, but France has still not thrown down all her guns. Last week, the Elysée Palace issued a statement to the effect that France was ready to send 1,500 soldiers within 24 hours of receiving an international mandate. The French excuse is that the task force is

necessary to satisfy the refugees' humanitarian needs. But why can't the refugees' needs be met in Rwanda? Why doesn't anyone listen when Africa speaks up? Rwandan refugees are going home and this impels the international community to re-think its plans to send troops to Zaire.

As always, comments by American officials have been discourteous. "We are the indispensable nation. But we don't have to do everything," scoffed Washington's Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, at a press conference in New York. In Washington, US Defence Secretary William Perry rather insensitively reminded his listeners: "We [America] are not the Salvation Army. That is not our ordinary business."

But for once the Americans are on the good guys' side. True to her charming self, Albright stressed that participants at today's Stuttgart meeting must "reassess" their intervention plan in view of the return of the Rwandan refugees to their homeland.

A westward drift of refugees deeper into Zaire was unacceptable to all the warring protagonists. An eastward drift was politically untenable to the ethnic Hutu militias and their French and Zairean government backers. The militiamen are ruthlessly using the refugees as human shields. The return of the mainly Hutu refugees to their homeland is proof that the war in Africa's Great Lakes region is not tribal. With America's unexpected help, it has become very difficult for Operation Phoenix Tusk to turn into another Operation Turquoise.

France is the fall guy. The contents of an unclassified UN report were leaked on Tuesday and present conclusive evidence that French, British, Italian and Spanish firms armed Zaire-based Hutu chauvinist militias to the teeth soon after their expulsion from Rwanda in 1994. France's Operation Turquoise in 1994-95 was a terrible fiasco. "I wish that [the] steps be taken to reinforce security in the [Zairean] region of Goma and Bu-

kravu, so that by controlling these two airports and main roads we can bring aid to the refugees," French President Jacques Chirac told reporters this week. The problem is that nobody believes that this is his true intention. Most of the refugees Chirac is supposedly worried about have actually returned home. They were mainly Hutu who had had enough of the few of their fellow tribesmen who forced them to make voluntary contributions or pay what was for starving refugees a hefty fine — \$10 a head — to oust the Rwandan government.

Writer François Xavier Verschave detailed the French part in instigating the Rwandan genocide of 1994 in which an estimated 500,000 ethnic Tutsi were murdered in cold blood. "France has blood on its hands in Rwanda," wrote Verschave recently. Canada's hands are clean — so far. Africans have not forgotten Somalia 1992-93. In Somalia, Canada's name was sullied because of the conduct of Canadian troops there. "If the international force tries to support the puppets of [Zairean President] Mobutu [Sese Sese] regime in their fictitious result will be a situation like Somalia," Kabila warned this week.

France hedged its bets on Hutu chauvinist militias and Mobutu's men being winners. France felt that the international force would be a winning idea. France was wrong on both counts. The backlash against France and its hirelings is undoubtedly under way. This could get nastier. French failures in Africa have to be seen in context. America's rising star in the region and its excellent working relations with the Rwandan and Ugandan governments are re-drawing the political map of the region.

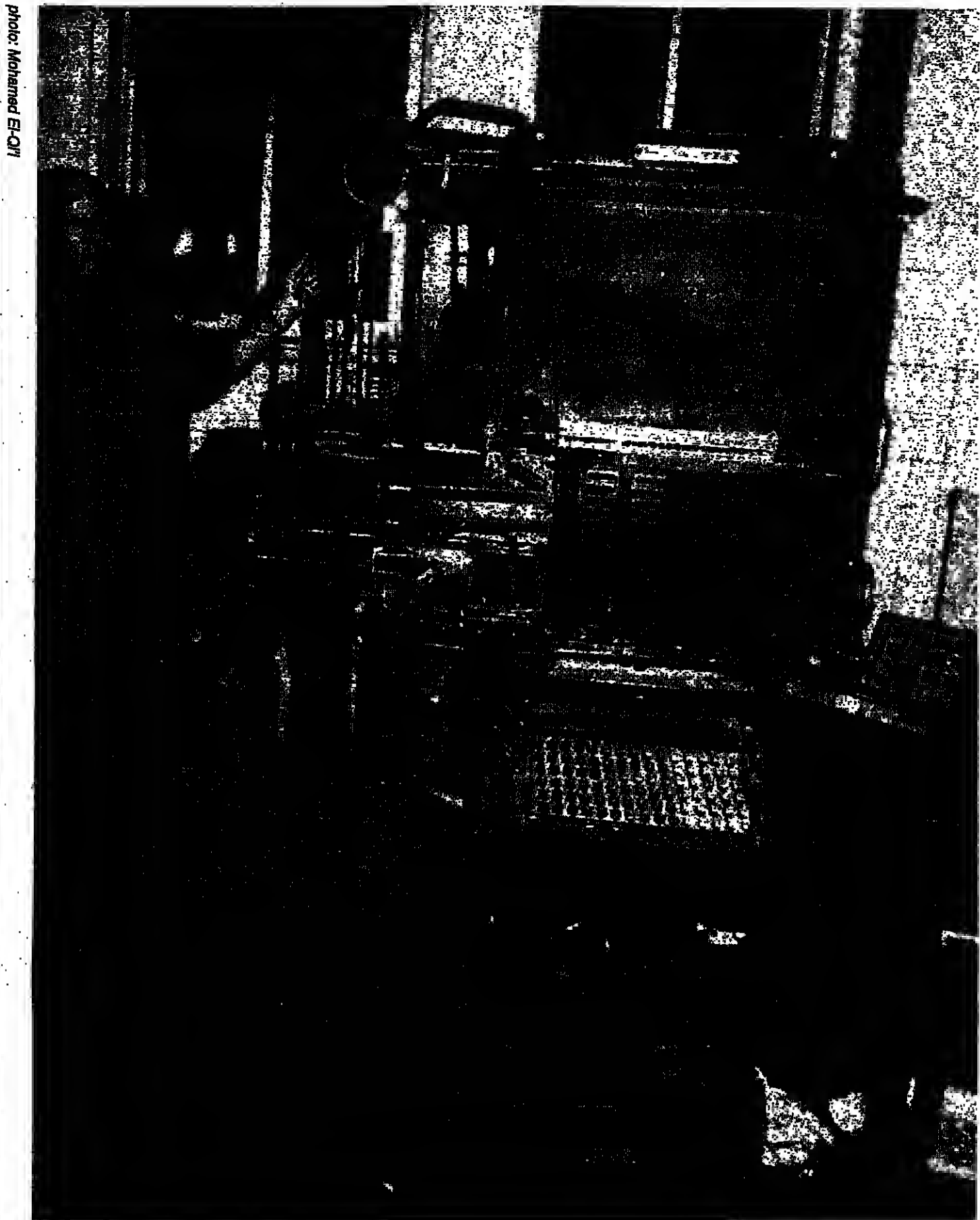
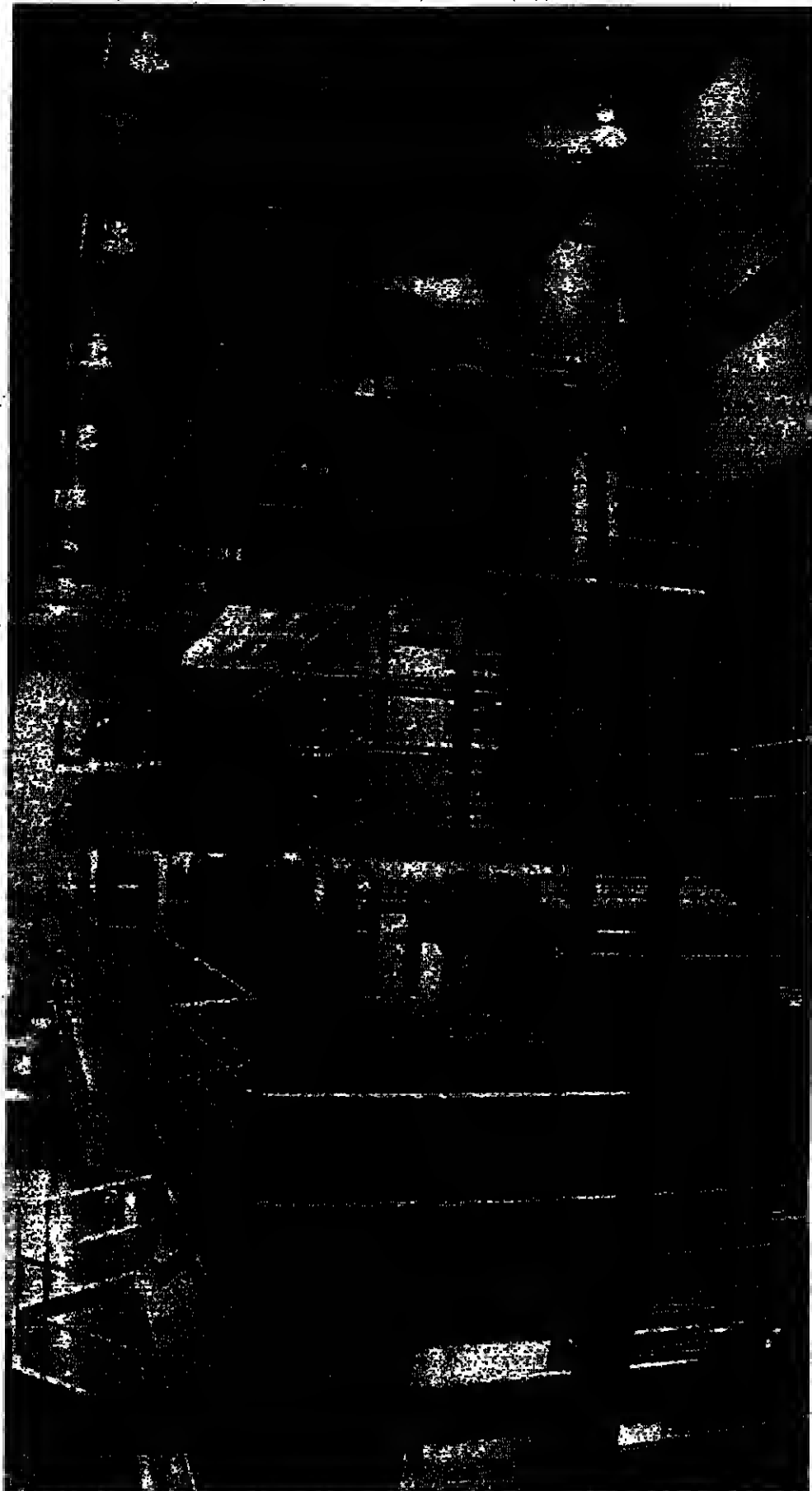
After suffering years of being eclipsed by *les anglophones* in its own traditional African domains, Paris is preparing for a counter-attack masterminded by Foccart. Bilingual Canada saved the day by volunteering to lead a multinational that Africans do not want. France is feeling bruised by the virulent anti-French tone resonating around Africa.

Repeating France's battered reputation in Africa after its intervention in Rwanda on the side of the dreaded Hutu militias who wiped out some 20 per cent of their countrymen is no easy matter. According to Foccart's reasoning, the objective of fighting *les anglophones* justifies breaking, or at least bending, the rules a little. But pretending to play referee in a slinging match between Kabila and the Hutu militias would not wash with the African leaders that matter those of neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda. The international task force seems to have failed even before it has seriously got under way. Yet for all Foccart's hard-line rhetoric, ever since Algeria's independence, and especially after the debacle of Operation Turquoise, France can no longer play the hero in Africa. But coming to terms with Verschave's exposé could make it less of a villain.





To mark its 300th issue, *Al-Ahram Weekly* tried to put itself in context, tracing its roots in the history of Egyptian journalism, then taking a brief look at itself



Though several *Al-Ahram* publications, including the *Weekly*, are now printing in the state-of-the-art printing shop in October City (above left), *Al-Ahram* nostalgically holds on to long out-of-service, but still functioning, printing machines (above right)

The state of the press

As the Egyptian press slowly but surely gains more freedom, it has begun to tackle some previously taboo topics, writes Samir Sobhi

With close to 300 publications, catering to all kinds of readership and covering all manner of interests, the Egyptian press is a flourishing industry. From dailies to periodicals, from national (state-owned) publications to opposition newspapers, the vitality of the press during the past 15 years is an indication of a political climate in which the space for freedom of expression is larger than it had been for many decades.

There have been a large number of political and technical changes in the Egyptian press during the last 15 years," commented Farouq Abu Zeid, dean of the Faculty of Mass Communications at Cairo University. "But all these changes are due to one basic factor: the broader political freedoms granted by the state."

Since its nationalisation in the early 1960s, the press's relationship with the state has been an unstable one, rocked by contemporary economic and political conditions. This instability was accentuated when the state allowed the opposition parties to produce newspapers.

For example, in 1973 the press strongly supported the state in its battle with Israel, but by 1977 some newspapers were opposing moves towards a peace treaty with Israel. "These were among the most difficult times between the state and the press. Many journalists who wrote for national newspapers were sidelined and some of the opposition newspapers were repeatedly banned," recalled Mahmoud El-Maraghi, editor-in-chief of *Al-Arabi*, the Nasserist Party's weekly newspaper.

Relations reached an all-time low, many would agree, in 1981, when over 1,000 journalists, intellectuals and politicians were imprisoned by the late President Anwar El-Sadat.

"When President Hosni Mubarak came to office the press breathed a sigh of relief," said El-Maraghi. According to some journalists and political activists, Mubarak was planning both to reorganise the state from within and to rework Egypt's relationship with the rest of the world. "To do this he needed to start by enlarging the margin of freedom of expression," added El-Maraghi.

Mubarak released the political prisoners and publicly declared that he would not send anyone to jail for exercising their right of freedom of ex-

pression. It was as a consequence of this, experts argue, that the press was able to broaden its horizons. All the political opposition parties began to publish newspapers. Those opposition newspapers which were already licensed began to appear more regularly. New specialised political publications appeared. "Had it not been for the [increased] freedom of expression, publishers wouldn't have undertaken the commitment of putting out so many publications," said Abu Zeid.

The new publications took a more forceful approach to criticising the policies and attitudes of the government. Moreover, often fierce criticism was launched directly at top government officials.

"We do have some lines that we don't cross. We don't criticise the army, for instance, because this goes against the principles of national security, but otherwise we write what we want and we haven't been banned, although we do get harassed by the security forces," said Mohamed Abdel-Qodus, a journalist at the Islamist twice-weekly *Al-Shaabi*, which is printed by the Labour Party.

"We have played an important role in monitoring and revealing the corruption of some government officials and its impact on people's lives," said Gamal Badawi, editor of *Al-Wafd* daily.

"Some might argue that the state is allowing the opposition to print criticism of the government just to allay people's frustrations, but I think this is wrong. What we are enjoying now is in fact the first stage of complete freedom of expression to the press; it is a stage whereby the press is playing a role as supervisor of the state's policies," said Abu Zeid.

According to editors and analysts, it is the different shades of opinion expressed within the national press that have been most interesting. While the three leading dailies, *Al-Ahram*, *Al-Akhar* and *Al-Gomhuria*, still hold to a fairly conservative style of journalism, other publications have adopted a more progressive style.

"*Rose El-Youssef* is a good example," said El-Maraghi. "Although it is a national magazine, *Rose El-Youssef* has trodden the previously taboo roads of sex, morality and corruption."

Indeed, the weekly magazine has made straightforward accusations of corruption against a number of cabinet ministers. It also opened what would previously have been considered classified files on a variety of sexual and political issues that include anything from hymenography to power struggles within the Cabinet. Its style has been copied by other, similar, magazines.

"The national publications became concerned that the opposition papers would pull the rug from under their feet and that is why they had to act and show some criticism of the government," commented Badawi.

"There is no doubt that in Egypt we now enjoy a degree of freedom of expression unknown in most other states in the region," added El-Maraghi.

To further enforce the nascent freedom of expression, over the last few years, the three leading publishing houses of *Al-Ahram*, *Akhar* and *Al-Tahrir* started producing new publications like *Nizf Al-Donya*, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, *Al-Ahram Hebdo*, *Akhar Al-Howadith*, and *Horriyat*, which provide a forum for the debate of controversial issues.

And, with the permitted margin of freedom of expression seemingly secure, Egyptians who are not allowed to print independent newspapers in Egypt have registered their publications in other countries and now distribute them in Egypt.

This is not to imply that the press and the government co-exist in a state of perpetual honeymoon. Only last year the state and the press had a serious falling out over a new press law, Law 93 of 1995, which attempted to restrict the freedom of the press. Criticism of the law and the government which had introduced it, was printed in both the opposition and national press, and in the end President Mubarak intervened to end the affair.

Parallel to this freedom of expression has come an improvement in the techniques of news gathering, newspaper design and printing. The introduction of modern technology, both in terms of information gathering and printing — better newspaper and more advanced printing machines — have made the final product more appealing to the reader and introduced many interesting additions to Egypt's newstands.

زوجة توت عنخ آمون تظهر اعجابها



Al-Lataif, 9 April, 1923 advertising "A shoe, Tutankhamun's wife would have wished to wear." A year earlier Howard Carter had discovered the boy-Pharaoh's tomb

Writing revolution

Aretino's name is not familiar to most readers of the *Herald Tribune* or the *New York Times*. But the Florentine art lover and scholar may well have been the father of Western journalism, according to Abdallah Schieffler, director of the American University in Cairo's Ashmolean Centre. Aretino's hobby was collecting gossip about his well-known Renaissance contemporaries, from noblemen to the Pope himself. While he put some of the information he collected to lucrative use — selling it to his victims in exchange for their peace of mind — he was not always able to strike a deal to his liking. Those who refused to pay for his silence were exposed to their friends, families and neighbours: Aretino, bent on revenge, lampooned them mercilessly, plastering the walls of the city with pages torn from his diaries.

Egyptian journalism began somewhat differently. The intimate lives of the social elite were not its prime target: most newspapers, rather, sprang up in opposition to the political situation prevailing at the time. By the turn of this century, there were 200 regular publications read in Egypt, of which 60 dailies (some appearing morning and evening). The most widely read among the latter were *Al-Ithad Al-Misri*, *Al-Akhar*, *Al-Ahram*, *Al-Muqattam*, *Al-Mu'ayyid* and *Misr*. Many of these publications were short-lived; others survived well into the twentieth century. At first newspapers were read only by subscribers, but under Khedive Abbas Hilmi an estimated 100,000 copies were being sold daily, reaching double that figure in times of unrest. To satisfy such a large demand, printing presses were established and thrived. A rotary press was soon introduced, used for the first time to print *Al-Mu'ayyid*, the most popular paper of the period. By this point, Egypt could already boast 75 years of journalistic experience.

Adieu Bonaparte

Although it is sometimes thought that the French expedition was instrumental to the introduction of the printed word in Egypt, their two publications, *Le Courrier de l'Egypte* and *La Décade Egyptienne* (1798), were mainly issued for propaganda purposes: the French did nothing to encourage the printing of local papers, having picked up their printing press and taken it with them when they withdrew.

It is to Mohamed Ali's projects that Egypt owes its first newspaper. In 1827, having established the first Egyptian printing press, the Pasha ordered the publication of a khedival journal, more to keep himself up to date on the country's affairs and its finances than to inform his people of current affairs. He soon felt the need to publicise the government's achievements, however, and the khedival journal was upgraded to become, in December 1828, the first Egyptian official newspaper, *Al-Waqa'i Al-Misriyya* ("Egyptian Chronicle"). It was published in Turkish and Arabic, and Rifa' Al-Tahtawi later became editor.

In 1831 a paper factory was opened, making paper out of old rags bought from the public and used paper collected from the various diwans and administrations. From then on and for a long time, Egyptian newspapers were printed on paper obtained through recycling.

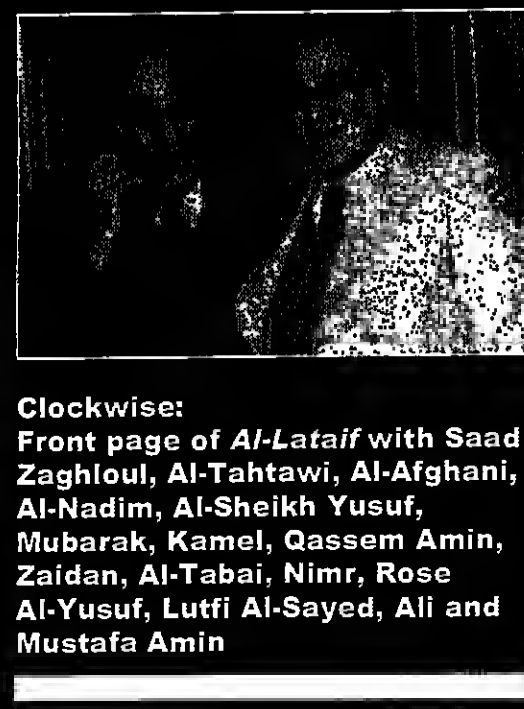
Al-Waqa'i Al-Misriyya was sold to government employees at a subscription fee, namely those earning 1000 piastres or more: army officers and the educated class. It was widely distributed, however, among students of the state schools, who received free copies.

Le Moniteur Egyptien appeared in French in 1832, printed at the Ras El-Tin press. It was founded by members of the foreign community in Alexandria, with some support from Mohamed Ali, who hoped that it would serve as a means of making his policies known to and popular amongst foreign readers, thus countering *Le Moniteur Ottoman*, which was inimical to him. The paper, however, vanished after 1834, until it was revived by Khedive Ismail in 1874 to serve the same end. After the British occupation, *Le Moniteur* was reinstated as *Le Journal Officiel* and merged with *Al-Waqa'i* to become the government's "Official Newspaper" (*Al-Garida Al-Rasmiya*).

Modernisation hits the newsstands

Khedive Ismail was to reap the full benefits of his grandfather's various projects, especially his concern for having various scientific missions sent abroad. With Egypt looking towards the West, Ismail was ready to forge ahead in this direction.

This current brought with it a question expressed by intellectuals such as Rifa' Al-Tahtawi: How to become part of the modern world while retaining one's Muslim identity? One may see the attempt to resolve this question as a principal impetus to the growth of the periodical press. Until 1860, the only important newspapers had been those published by the government in Cairo and Constantinople, containing mainly official news. There had also been a few papers published in French, Greek and Armenian, but there was little to be had in Arabic until the 1860s, which witnessed an increase in the number of printing presses, of writers more proficient in the new journalistic Arabic, and of the reading public. A comparative liberalisation of the Turkish and Egyptian regimes also allowed for the creation of private newspapers and periodicals.



Clockwise: Front page of *Al-Lataif* with Saad Zaghloul, Al-Tahtawi, Al-Afghani, Al-Nadim, Al-Sheikh Yusuf, Mubarak, Kamel, Qassem Amin, Zaidan, Al-Tabai, Nimr, Rose Al-Yusuf, Lutfi Al-Sayed, Ali and Mustafa Amin

For the next thirty years, a number of prominent Lebanese were to become owners of large newspapers published in Beirut, Cairo and Constantinople. They generally belonged to communities which, throughout the eighteenth century, had undertaken a careful study of the Arabic language; a passionate love for the language and its literature had spread among them. It was therefore natural that they would carve themselves a place in the establishment of a number of newspapers and periodicals which mirrored their ideas.

Arabic papers were also appearing in Beirut and Istanbul with Ottoman official backing and support. The most prominent in the Arabic-speaking countries was *Al-Jawab* ("Letters"), edited by Ahmed Faris Al-Shidiyaki. A Christian Syrian convert to Islam, Shidiyaki launched his pro-Islamic paper in Istanbul in 1862. For twenty years its circulation rates were unrivalled by those of any other Arabic-language publication. It consistently defended the Ottoman Sultan and Muslim rulers against ever-increasing European encroachment. Shidiyaki remained a staunch defender of Ismail when the khedive was deposed in 1879. The paper was discontinued in 1884.

Opening the first Egyptian parliament in 1866, Khedive Ismail had decided that reports on its proceedings were necessary. To this end, he asked one of El-Tahtawi's students, the poet and scholar Abdallah Effendi Abul-Seoud, to establish a newspaper. Soon *Wadi El-Nil* was reporting on and condoning the decisions of Maglis El-Shura, enriching its accounts with official news of the khedive and the ministers.

The khedive also financed and supported professional and academic journals related to the activities of the first modern Egyptian intellectuals, teachers, scientists and officials. Such were the medical journal *Ya'ub Al-Tibb* (1865) and *Rawdat Al-Madaris* (1870) an educational and pedagogic journal directed by Ali Pasha Mubarak (the Minister of Public Works) and edited by El-Tahtawi. Even the army published its own papers: *Al-Garida Al-Askariya* and in 1874 *Garida Arkan Harb Al-Gaysh Al-Misri*.

To counter the "official" discourse of *Wadi El-Nil*, Ibrahim El-Muwailhi and Ottoman Galal established their own "opposition" paper, *Nashat Al-Afkar*. In 1869, Ismail closed the paper — a heavy-handed attempt to silence his critics. In 1875, Mohamed Anis was authorised to launch *Rawdat Al-Afkar*, which faithfully applauded official policy; the same year, *Al-Ahram*, founded by Selim and Bishara Taqia, obtained its licence — on condition that the paper would refrain from reporting on political matters.

Al-Afghani's mark

Between 1875 and 1882, relations between East

and West took a new turn. The seizure of power by Europe meant that the *umma*, that "political community expressing itself in all the forms of political life", to use Vattikotis' expression, was in danger. A problem more serious than the first was now threatening the Muslim countries: how to resist the new threat from the West.

It is during this period that the influence of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani became marked in the evolution of Egyptian newspapers. He encouraged his disciples to write, publish newspapers, influence public opinion; through them, he had a part in bringing about the first stirrings of a specifically national consciousness and discontent with Ismail's policies.

On his return from Istanbul in 1871, he became the guide and unofficial teacher of a group of young men, mainly from Al-Azhar, who were to play a crucial role in Egyptian political life. Among them were Mohamed Abdou and Saad Zaghloul. The developments of the 1870s and the events which ended with the British occupation of 1882 gave Al-Afghani's ideas a new force over readers' minds and a new importance in political life.

In 1876, his teachings were propounded in a publication, *Mir'at Al-Ahwal*, in which Ya'qoub Samou' heaped abuse on the Khedive Ismail (it is said that another strong influence behind this publication was Prince Halim, contender for Ismail's place). The following year, Samou' published *Abu Nadhara Zarga* ("The Man in Blue Glasses"), the first Egyptian paper completely written in colloquial Arabic. Expelled from the country by Ismail, Samou' went to Paris, where he continued to publish variations upon the *Abu Nadhara* theme until his death in 1912.

In 1877 Selim Al-Naqqash published *Garida Misr*, edited by fellow Syrian Adib Ishaq, to oppose European control. This was followed by another daily, *Al-Tigra* ("Commerce"), which was suppressed by Rifa' Pasha in 1879. The same year, Selim Anhouri founded *Mir'at Al-Shariq*, edited by another of Al-Afghani's followers, Ibrahim Al-Laqqani. In 1880, Adib Ishaq published *Misr Al-Qahira*, in which he attacked the new Khedive Tawfiq. During the same period the Coptic minority was encouraged to publish its own paper, *Al-Watan*, founded in 1877 and edited by Mikhail Abdel-Sayed, while foreign papers, mainly French, such as *Le Progrès*, *L'Egypte*, and *Le Phare d'Alexandrie* were accorded licences.

For a while, Al-Afghani had remained on friendly terms with Ismail's son, Tawfiq, but Tawfiq soon banished his former ally to India, under pressure from the British consul-general and from fear of revolutionary ideas.

Inspired by Al-Afghani's philosophy and his encouragement to criticise the khedive's policies, dissatisfied with Ismail's "nationalist" government headed by Sherif Pasha, certain journalists and intellectuals (among them Adib Ishaq and Abdallah Al-Nadim) banded together in 1879 to form a se-

cret society in Alexandria. They called it Young Egypt (*Misr Al-Fata*), following the model of the famous Italian patriotic society. They published their own periodical under the same name, in which they attacked European influence in Egypt.

Agit-prop

When Al-Afghani was exiled, *Mir'at Al-Shariq* refused to publish the news. Tawfiq closed it down, as well as *Misr Al-Fata*, *Garida Misr* and *Al-Tigra* and stopped Egyptian papers published abroad (Samou' was opposing the khedive from Paris) from entering Egypt.

In 1881, *Al-Waqa'i* was developed into a daily with Mohamed Abdou as its chief editor. The 1881 Press Law was issued in an attempt to muzzle the opposition, at least partly.

Al-Afghani's teachings were not lost, however: close associates of his disciple, Mohamed Abdou, fusing Islamic thought with Egyptian feelings for their *umma* after the events of 1882, established the roots of a durable and potent Egyptian nationalism.

During this period, editorial writing began to play an important role in Egyptian political life and "there appeared one of the key figures of the modern era, the political journalist, concerned not so much to communicate ideas as to arouse strong feelings by skilful use of language". In Hourani's words, Ya'qoub Samou' and, to a lesser extent, Adib Ishaq were among the first to fit the description.

The press also played an important role in adapting classical Arabic to modern requirements, leading to the rise of neo-classical literary movements. It was mainly through the press that the evolution of modern Arabic writing and literature occurred in the past century. Prominent early writers were also publicists who wrote mainly for newspapers and magazines. Their books, for a long time, were collections of their newspapers and magazines articles. It can be said that the press performed the functions of a popular teacher in spreading a new national language and culture more attuned to the needs of an evolving society.

From the turn of the century and until 1952 at least, the press in Egypt reflected the conflict between conservative and progressive tendencies in social thought and life, often serving as a medium for the propagation of new ideas and movements. In no other Arab country has the written press played such a significant role in the development of a country as it did in Egypt.

The Urabi revolt may be considered as the coming of age of the Egyptian press. For the first time it reflected partisan views. Parallel to the increased political activity was an outspoken agitation of the press. In 1877-79 the papers of Adib Ishaq and Selim Al-Naqqash served as a platform for those opposed to the foreign control of Egyptian affairs. Abdallah Al-Nadim, orator, writer and editor of *Al-*

Tankit Wal-Tahit ("Jokes and Tears") became the spokesman of the Urabi group, calling for the support of Urabi against Khedive Tawfiq and the Europeans in his newly founded newspaper *Al-Tarif*. *Misr Al-Fata*, *Al-Mahrussa* and *Al-Mufid* also supported the Urabists and attacked the presence of European financial controllers in the country and the khedival administration which harboured them. Tawfiq tried for a while to counter this opposition by launching his own papers, one of which, *Al-Burhan*, was edited by the conservative Sheikh Hamza Fathallah. Mohamed Abdou supported the cause of the Urabists and was sentenced to exile along with them in 1882. He joined Al-Afghani in Paris in 1884, where together they published the short-lived but famous *Al-Urwa Al-Wuthqa* ("The Firm Bond").

With the end of the Urabi revolt, many of these publications disappeared while a number of their leading editors seem to have had second thoughts. Those who continued writing were inclined to uphold the Egyptian connection with the Sultan in Istanbul.

By 1895 a clear division of the Egyptian press had emerged. On one side stood the papers and magazines published by the Syrian emigres, prominent among which were the dailies *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Muqattam* (the latter founded in 1875 by Faris Nimr and Ya'qoub Sarrouf). Soon *Al-Muqattam* came to be identified with British policy in Egypt while *Al-Ahram* was sympathetic to French influence, critical of British policy and in favour of a continued link between Egypt, ruled by the khedive, and the Sultan in Istanbul.

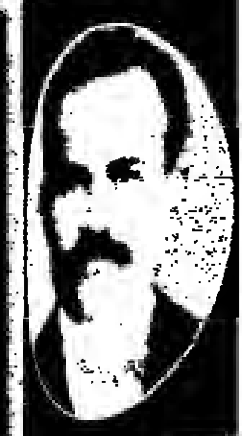
A weapon is refined

Other Syrians turned their attention to literary and educational reform. Of great importance in this respect was the founding of the monthly *Al-Hilal* by Jurji Zaydan. A self-taught historian, Zaydan brought to journalism advanced techniques and a consistently strong presentation of contemporary educational and social problems. His aim was to seek a rapprochement between Muslim Arabs in the common cause of Arab reform.

On the other side appeared a number of newspapers and magazines which represented the conservative Muslim point of view. Resolutely anti-British, they endeavoured to speak for the Egyptian people. Most prominent among these was *Al-Mu'ayyid* ("The Advocate"), edited by Sheikh Ali Youssef. Between 1890 and 1900, until the appearance of Mustafa Kamel's *Al-Liwa* ("The Standard"), *Al-Mu'ayyid* was the main platform for nationalist writers. It not only opposed the Syrian emigres' papers, it also opposed the reformed variant of Islam as preached by Mohamed Abdou in the *Official Newspaper*.

Ali Youssef received support from Tawfiq, and later from Abbas. His paper provided a forum for the training of many Muslim Egyptian journalists. It also encouraged the appearance of more papers rep-

From a govern-
ment publica-
tion Hassan tra-
nsmakers



The twentieth century in the early 1900s, formed. Hiss Al-Umm Egyptian party, was 1907, the most prominent Al-Sayid, the magazine *Garida*, from its inception appeared early in 1911 for discussions or forming an enlighten- ment. This task o- party line was rejection of reforms based on the existence of the khedive. The existence of the khedive in Alexandria on 22 (the death of Mustafa Kamel to organise h- in the National I- for the leadership of- party when he be- came a national strike. Ali Youssef launch- ed Al-Dustur (the C-

مكتبة من الأصل

From a government propaganda machine to the party publications of the twentieth century, Fayza Hassan traces the lives and times of Egypt's newsmakers — and the news that made them



basically a one-man-show, it disintegrated with Sheikh Youssef's retirement in 1913. Describing the period from 1905 to 1906, Salama Moussa wrote: "[There were three newspapers with] good circulation, *Al-Liwa*, which exhorted the people to demand the evacuation of the British and which was read by all the young men; *Al-Mu'ayyid*, which supported the khedive and was read by the sons of the Turkish families and the conservatives among the Egyptians; and *Al-Muqattaf*, which was pro-British and read by the officials."

Cultural debate

The promotion of new ideas from the West were basically disseminated by a press dominated by Syrian Christians opposing the Islamic solution as advocated by Ali Youssef. Among those who wrote for *Al-Muqattaf* ("Excerpt"), a scientific magazine published in Cairo and Beirut by Nimr and Sarrouf were linguists interested in simplifying the Arabic language (Amin Masloui and Abdel-Aziz Al-Bishri), translators and novelists like Fawzi Antoun and scientists like Shibli Al-Shumayyil, who was also a socialist interested in promoting science in the life of the Umma.

Jurji Zaydan was more attracted to history, geography, literature and ethics. The periodical *Al-Hilal*, which he had founded in 1892, was largely devoted to these subjects. Dar Al-Hilal emerged as one of the largest publishing houses in the Arab world. It produced a weekly, *Al-Ithnay wai-Dunya* ("Monday and the World"), the French pictorial weekly *Images* and the famous *Al-Musawwar*, its Arabic counterpart. Whereas all other periodicals started in the 19th century, including *Al-Muqattaf*, have disappeared, *Al-Hilal* has survived as a medium for the popular presentation of topics with human interest.

Ahmed Lutfi Al-Sayid was more preoccupied with the development of modern thought in Egypt. He did his most important work relevant to the development of secular liberal ideas while he was editor of *Al-Garida*. His ideas, however, failed to take root; other groups emerged to lead the struggle for power in the movement for independence.

1918-1939

During the first World War, martial law and censorship curtailed newspapers' activities. *Al-Garida* ceased publication in 1915; *Al-Liwa* had already disappeared. Saad Zaghloul was elected to the Assembly in 1913-14 and, although it could not be considered more than a "scissors debate society" in the war years, he did much to establish the bases for the public support mobilised in 1919. The views of Qassem Amin and the support they received from the *Garida-Umma* group, with which Zaghloul was identified, linked him and the Wafd Party to the participation of women in the anti-British demonstrations throughout 1919 and later to Husni Sha'rawi's movement.

The period between the two world wars was fraught with agitation, with the Wafd Party dominating the political scene. In 1930, Ismail Sidqi Pasha founded Al-Shaab Party, with its own newspaper. In 1936 the Constitution was restored and the Anglo-Egyptian treaty well received. The second World War was looming ahead, however, and with it the presses ground to a halt once more. In 1945, the Wafd, which had ridden to power on a wave of popular support, stood discredited. The old political groups had lost their control over the Egyptian street and a vacuum in leadership could be clearly felt.

1945-1952

On 9 June 1945, censorship restrictions were lifted; on 4 October martial law was abolished. While radical students' and workers' committees organised political action, writers and editors grouped around the new cultural associations, intellectual clubs and publishing houses which had mushroomed at the end of the war.

Two reviews, *Al-Fagr Al-Gadid* ("New Dawn") and *Al-Talib* ("Vanguard") were main poles of attraction. Radical activists played a major role in the labour strikes and demonstrations that took place between 1946 and 1952. Meanwhile the leftist elements in the Wafd Party took up the cause of the urban proletariat via the pages of *Al-Misri*, owned by the brothers Abul-Fat'h.

Another Wafd leftist, Mohamed Mandour, founded and edited the monthly journal *Al-Baath* ("Renaissance"), which became a platform for intellectuals advocating the limitation of land ownership and the intervention of the state in bringing about radical economic and social change. The Muslim Brotherhood's newspaper was widely read, as were its monthlies *Al-Shikab* ("Shooting Star") and *Al-Talib Al-Misri* ("Egyptian Students").

Agitation had reached a paroxysm but was again brought to a halt by the hostilities in Palestine. When martial law was lifted in May 1950 after the unilateral abrogation of the 1936 Treaty, the radical press called openly for a revolution. When Ali Maher set up his strong government with the blessings of a Wafd terrified by the violence it had witnessed, the stage was set for July 1952.

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The power of words

Fayza Hassan speaks with Khalil Sabat, veteran professor of journalism at Cairo University, about the power, politics and growing pains of the press



Egypt has a history of publishing newspapers in foreign languages. What is the difference between these publications and *Al-Ahram Weekly* or *Al-Ahram Hebdo*?
Egypt's foreign press until 1952 was there basically to protect the interests of foreigners residing in Egypt. *Al-Ahram*'s publications are different in so far as they are Egyptian publications in a foreign language presenting an Egyptian point of view to the foreign reader and inviting him to know our country and our people better. The *Weekly* and the *Hebdo* do not address the interests of a particular community or group.

Egyptian journalism is often dated back to the time of the French expedition; is there any truth in that?
The French expedition was not only a military one. It was also scientific. They brought their printing press to print their own journals, *Le Courier de l'Egypte* and *La Décade Egyptienne*. The first appeared every five days, sometimes less regularly, but its basic aim was to keep the members of the expedition informed of what was going on in terms of their activities and also to disseminate the news coming from France. The second publication was for their own use, a sort of scientific journal in which the servants recorded their studies. It was not for public use. There was nothing in all this that could have been of any use to Egypt.

They took their printing press with them when they left.
They did, and they took the printing plates with it. I saw it in 1950 when I went to France. They even took the same printing press to Algeria in 1830 and brought it back with them when they left.

Why go to all that trouble?
They came with important scientists like Monges. They expected their expedition to be profitable on several levels. It is a mistake to believe that there was anything in it for Egypt. They had to leave but they took with them studies that were not only useful to them but to many of those who followed them.

New Abdallah Menou, who converted to marry a girl, Khadiga, from Rashid and wanted to stay in Egypt, ordered on 26 November 1800 that a paper in Arabic, *Al-Tanbih*, be published. But the expedition was already in trouble and this paper was never published.

What about the press under Mohamed Ali?
Mohamed Ali wanted to modernise Egypt. He created several printing presses. The one in Bulaq [the Al-Ahram buildings are an extension of this press's original site] is the one that is remembered, but there were several others at the Citadel, and also in Alexandria at Ras El-Tin.

The Bulaq printing press became functional in 1819 and in 1829 it printed *Al-Waqf Al-Misriya* for the first time, in both Arabic and Turkish.

Did Abbas encourage journalism?
No, and neither did Said. Said gave the Bulaq printing works to a friend as a present and let him publish the *Waqf*. One has to wait for Ismail to see any progress in this domain.

Ismail has been maligned but he did a great deal to modernise Egypt. It is under his rule that we see the first privately owned newspaper appear, *Wadi Al-Nil* in 1867, together with two other papers; but, more importantly, Ismail brought back the printing press and hired foreigners to run it.

As a matter of fact, Ismail encouraged journalists so much that they did not fear him. Ya'qoub Samou' actually made fun of him in *Abu Nuhara*. Samou' was paid by Prince Halim [one of Mohamed Ali's sons], who thought that he, and not Ismail, should have been khedive.

Samou' is often portrayed as a sort of popular hero.
He has been made much of by certain leftists because he was against the khedive, but in reality I do not think he was a man of principle. The more I read about him the more convinced I become that he was not a patriot. When he was in France he published a paper, *L'Univers*, in which he defended the Ottoman Sultan. He was always working for someone. He should be credited for his theatrical work, but as a journalist I still maintain that he lacked integrity.

Ismail was deposed in 1879. Did that change anything for the press?
The private press thrived, especially after 1882. Apart from *Al-Ahram* there were many newspapers published by Syrians like *Al-Muqattaf*.



Amr Rifai has his stand in Abdel-Khaleq Tharwat Street beneath Sabat's windows. Amr Rifai and Madbouli were both profiled in the *Weekly*

Word on the street

"*AHRAH, Akhbar, Gomhouriya...*" The hoarse voices ring out every day at the intersections, writes Samir Snbhi, on street corners, at traffic lights, as the newspaper vendors work the lines of cars. A hand is extended and the driver raps out his choice over the din of a million motors revving, horns blaring, pedestrians dodging minibus drivers swerving around big red buses... On the pavements, newspapers and magazines are weighted down with small rocks against the wind. The pages flap sharply, cracking in the breeze. A small boy makes change and hurls his hands out papers, advertising loudly all the while.

Early in the morning, the newspaper vendor makes the rounds, cycling through the suburbs, accompanied only by the thud of the rolled-up newspaper as it smacks onto subscribers' balconies.

Newspaper boys have been around ever since newsprint hit the streets. The profession was organised in 1964, when President Gamal Abdel-Nasser decreed that an insurance and retirement fund of LE5000 be set up for the vendors at the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance.

Egypt's oldest newspaper seller, Mukhtar Mohamed, died in Mahalla El-Kobra in 1990; the country's most successful, Madbouli, has become a well-known publisher and distributor, but the papers are still laid out on the pavement in front of his assiduously frequented and well-appointed establishment on Talaat Harb Square. Amr Rifai, who sold newspapers in front of Club Mohamed Ali in the '40s, still cycles to Al-Ahram every day, a stack of papers and magazines tucked under his arm, ready to spread the word.

Windows on Egypt

Is Al-Ahram Weekly providing its readers with what they want? Dina Ezzat tries to find out

Al-Ahram Weekly is getting older, but is it getting any wiser? To help mark our 300th issue, we interviewed a small cross-section of the Weekly's regular readers (25): foreigners living in Egypt, including foreign diplomats; Middle East correspondents both inside and outside the country; Egyptian experts; and diplomats stationed in Egyptian embassies overseas.

All in all, the feedback was positive. The general view was that the paper is offering its readers many windows onto Egyptian political, economic and social life, but that it needs to provide wider coverage of the region and the Third World, always, of course, from "an Egyptian perspective".

The domestic political scene

"Well-covered" and "accurate" seemed to be the bywords for the Weekly's coverage of the political scene in Egypt.

"It is very important for me to read the Weekly to get to know what is happening in Egypt; wherever I go in the region I try to find it," said Antonio Ferrari, senior Middle East correspondent of the leading Italian newspaper *Corriere Della Sera*.

"I subscribe to it because it is a good source of information on the political map in Egypt," commented Evangelos Antonaros, the Middle East correspondent of the well known German newspaper *Die Welt*. "It doesn't just tell you the news, it also provides good analysis," he added. Both correspondents, along with some other readers, cited coverage of the Islamist movement, its clash with the government and its impact on national trends as examples of Weekly reporting and feature writing at its best.

"There was also the coverage of the general parliamentary elections, including the lead-up stories, which offered a good dissection of Egypt's political map," added Hoda Abdel-Nasser, professor of political science at Cairo University.

For English-speaking foreigners living in Egypt — regardless of their nationality — the Weekly seems to be a major source of information on the domestic scene. While the vast majority of those interviewed have access to other foreign and local publications in English, many of them like to turn to the Weekly for more in-depth and informed coverage.

Opinion was split, however, on the extent of the Weekly's coverage of controversial issues, with some expressing concern that the Weekly tended to steer clear of "difficult" issues. "While the paper is pretty good on the whole, I am afraid that my assessment of the coverage of the thorny issues that one hears about would be 'fair' rather than 'good'; it is not juicy enough," said Jane Amin, a long-time British resident in Cairo.

Others disagreed. "I always find a good debate on controversial issues. For example, your coverage of the Abu Zeid case was very good and represented both points of views," said Abdel-Nasser. And, commented Elizabeth Taylor, programme officer for poverty issues at the Middle East and North Africa Ford Foundation office, "The issue of human rights... is well covered."

Some readers criticised the Weekly for what one of them termed, "its occasional tendency to tow the official line." Still, one of the first things noted by most of those interviewed was what they perceived as the Weekly's "exceptional candour" in covering "sensitive" domestic political issues — "more than any other national publication, whether in Arabic or foreign languages," several readers said. Most readers wanted wider and more extensive coverage of the local political scene, however.

The economy

More stories and more human interest perspectives are needed on the Weekly's economy page, according to our poll.

However, readers were generally impressed with the coverage of Egypt's economic reform programme. "Here in the US it is the source of information on Egypt's economic reform programme for the concerned members of the US business community... I often use it as an official text," said Basma Hafez, press attaché at the Egyptian Embassy in Washington.

The interviewed sample seemed keen on more coverage of the economy. "The page offers a good perspective, but more debate on economic issues would be good," said Elizabeth Khalifa, country director of the Amideast office in Cairo. Like other readers we spoke to, Khalifa believes that a more detailed focus on small and middle business enterprises is needed.

"It would be interesting to deal more with the human aspects. Somehow I feel that the economy stories are a bit dehumanised," commented Antonaros. "We hear a lot about how the economic reform programme in Egypt is being implemented, but let us also hear about how it is affecting the people in their day to day life. Let us have the perspective of the people."

Some readers, on the other hand, are keen on more hard-core economic writing. "It is very nice to have the features, but it is also interesting to have the analysis of specialised economists," said Amin. And, with trading on the stock market taking off, some readers said they wanted to see a better presented stock market report.

The Weekly, many readers said, needs to contribute to the assessment of the reform programme by dedicating more space to both the stories of success, and failure, under the current reform measures.

Middle East

The region pages should be expanded and diversified, and the stories should have more colour, according to most of the readers we interviewed who take an interest in regional politics.

"It is true that the Weekly is primarily a national newspaper, but it could certainly enlarge its coverage of the Middle East in a way that does not overshadow the paper's dedication to the local scene," suggested Abdel-Nasser.

"We know about what is happening in Palestine, but we also need to know more about what is happening in Iraq and the Maghreb countries," said Taylor.

Dedicated readers of the Region pages said that they were looking forward to a more comprehensive, less fragmented, coverage of the region. For example, while they find it informative to have stories about the Islamist movement in this or that country, they would also like to see a story dealing with the Islamist movement in the region with a more holistic approach to give "a more complete picture of the region".

Coverage of the Middle East peace process, many say, is interesting but still incomplete. "The Graham Usher articles, for example, are very interesting," said Gerd El-Naggar, a long time Norwegian resident in Cairo. But, suggested Antonaros, "maybe there could be more articles about the impact of this political process on the lives of people on the ground."

According to one Cairo-based Western foreign correspondent, the coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict is "overly political". He finds the news stories are "from headlines to text attacking Israel". He added: "I think readers in this region would be better served by more independent and objective news writing."

But this was not the general impression among our polled readers. "I think that the coverage of the Middle East peace process is quite balanced," said Anthea Jubert, chargé d'affaires at the South African Embassy in Cairo.

Moreover, it is correspondents' in-depth features rather than the news stories that seemed to attract the readers. Those we spoke to said that while they could get the day to day news from the television and radio, it is in the area of features writing that a weekly newspaper can come into its own.

South-North

Most of the readers we spoke to said they did not buy the Weekly for the International pages, because there are other international papers with more access to the news and events in different parts of the world. However, they were more interested in reading about the Third World and the emerging Asian states.

According to Jubert, the Weekly has become "more internationally oriented and has widened its spectrum of world news coverage" during the last three years. But, there was, she added, still room for "more on South-North relations in terms of both news and analysis".

This view was reiterated by P. Kumaran, the press officer at the Indian Embassy in Cairo.

Abdel-Nasser emphasised the importance of retaining an Egyptian perspective. "It is not enough to just write about the countries of the South. We need to read about them from the point of view of their relationship to Egypt," she said. "It is always interesting to read about Latin America, but what is more interesting is to read about the relations between Latin America and other countries in our region."

Those who read the International and South pages out of general, rather than professional, interest found that the stories tended to verge on the academic and theoretical; they would prefer an approach that focused on grassroots experience rather than the theory of international relations. Some of these readers also had a problem with the length of the articles. "They are a bit too wordy," said Irene Bishay, a British resident in Egypt.

Opinion

When it came to the opinion pages, the readers seemed to be greatly influenced by the topic under discussion. According to our poll, it seems that the articles related to Egypt's politics and economy attracted the most readers, with articles on the Middle East coming second.

While a more diversified range of contributions from commentators across the political spectrum and from different schools of thought and countries was widely recommended, many seemed mainly interested in the contributions of such renowned writers as Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, Edward Said and Eric Rouleau. "Sometimes there are opinion articles that are merely an expression of their writer's views, and are not well argued," said Amin.

The room for a "richer" digest of the Arabic press was clearly signalled by those taking part in the poll. Providing non-Arabic readers with a comprehensive selection from the week's Arabic newspapers should be one of the main tasks to be undertaken in the future, they suggested.

Social issues

Al-Ahram Weekly's attempt to give full and detailed coverage of social trends in Egypt seemed to be one of its most appreciated efforts. "It is a very dynamic coverage," commented Khalifa.

"It is really very interesting," said Ferrari. "Take for example the recently published story about the problems of young people trying to get married. I think this is one of the best examples of how to approach a sensitive social problem in an appealing journalistic fashion."

"I think this is one of the best covered areas in the newspaper," said Taylor. "While development and women's issues seemed to grab the attention of many readers, other features dealing with the many facets of Egypt and the life of its people, including archaeological stories, features on Old Cairo and the *Pot Pourri* column, also attracted praise."

The space and focus given to these issues was also commended. "A couple of weeks ago Al-Ahram Weekly had the discovery of the royal quarters of Cleopatra as the lead story on its front page; I don't think there is any other non-specialised newspaper that would have done that," said Mahmoud El-Maraghi, editor-in-chief of the weekly paper *Al-Arabi*, published by the Nasserist Party.

There was a feeling among many of the readers we interviewed that the Weekly could give greater space to social issue stories to prevent the paper from being dry and too political.

Culture and entertainment

Many readers found the Weekly's Listings useful and generally accurate. However, most of the polled sample expressed concern at the very limited space dedicated to entertainment. "It certainly could use a bit of jazzing up," commented one reader.

And while many praised what were generally termed as "excellent" opera and theatre reviews, some expressed concern that the culture pages were not doing enough to reflect the full spectrum of Egyptian cultural life. "I don't buy Al-Ahram Weekly just to read about opera and ballet," said one Canadian woman. "I want to find more about Egyptian culture."

According to film director Youssri Nasrallah, more space needs to be dedicated to providing readers with a good digest of the newly released books and films, the work of Egyptian artists who have not had media exposure, and specifically Egyptian cultural trends.



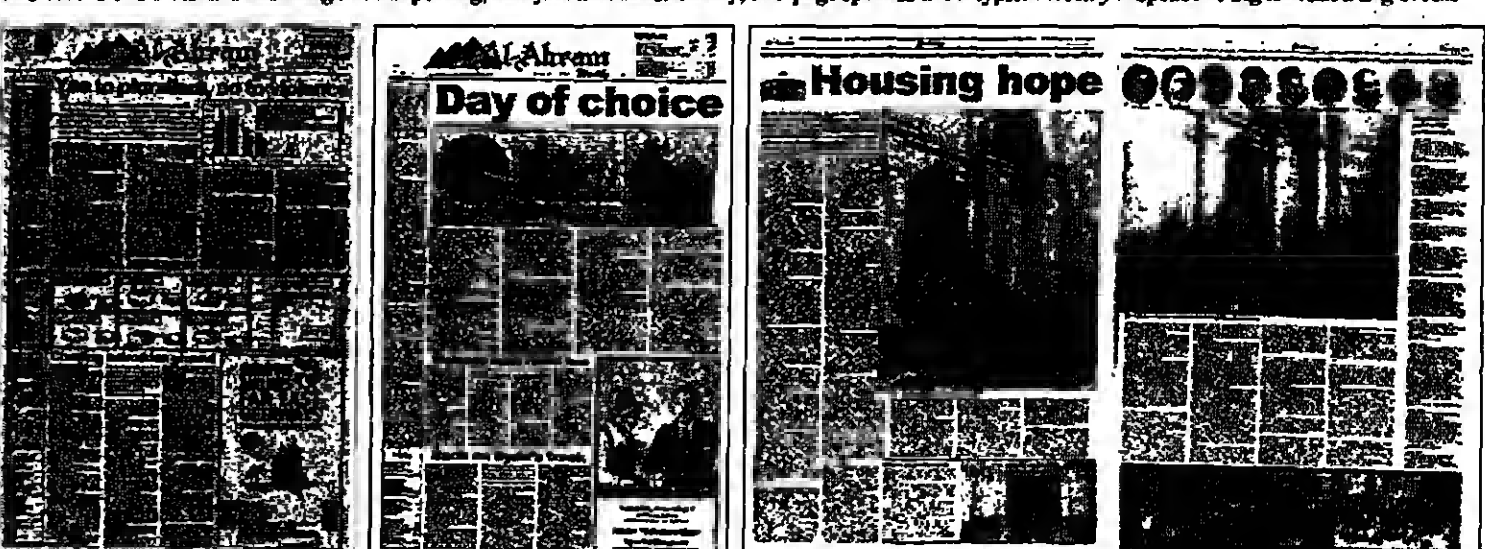
THE FRONT PAGE: Zero one issue (rather embarrassing today); with Mubarak in Washington; honouring Mahfouz; bidding Mitterrand Adieu



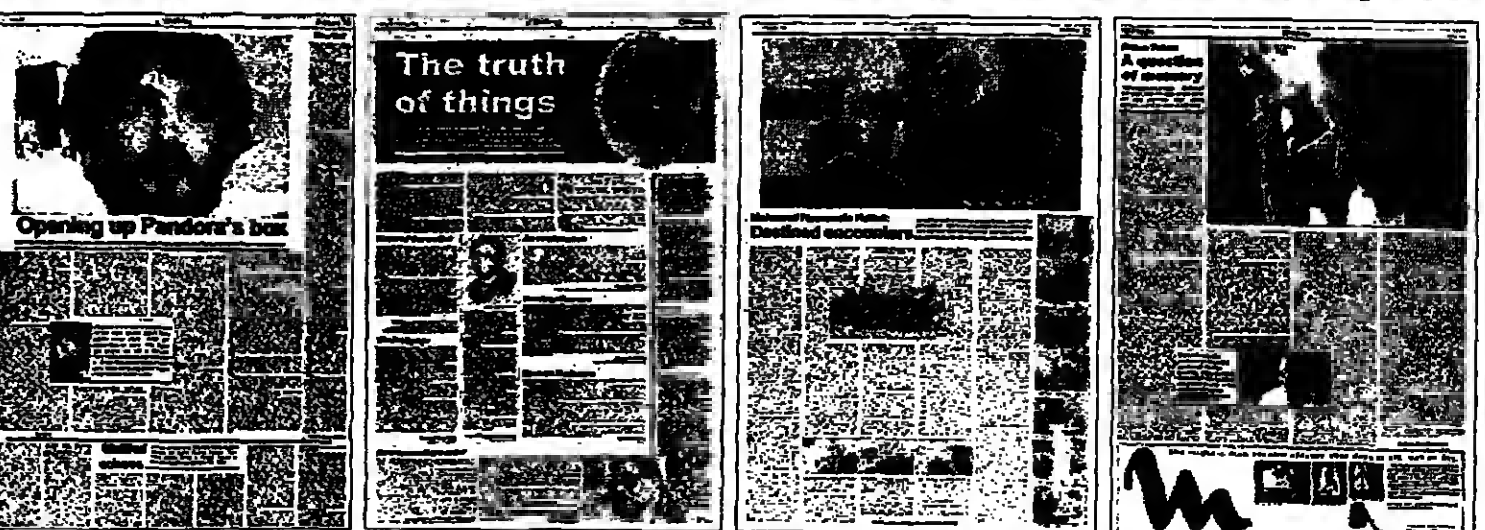
SPECIAL: The Weekly takes pride in its single-issue supplements, dealing with historic land-marks; major events, such as the ICPD and campaigns



MOVED TO COVER: Combining news reporting, analyses and commentary, two-page spreads are a typical Weekly response to big and shocking events



EYE ON DEMOCRACY: A first-of-its-kind poll of 1,500 people; extensive coverage of parliamentary elections; Egypt's parliamentary heritage revisited



DEFENCE OF ENLIGHTENMENT: Chahine's *Al-Muhajer*, by our late colleague Mohamed Shebli; honouring Bahaaeddin; profiling Heikal; Taher



PRIDE AND BLOOPERS: Taking pride in our feminist heritage; a light look at our modern history and slipping badly, the "dealock" fiasco

The Clinton paradox

Clinton's re-election was a victory for both shameful compromise and the scourge of corporate money which has bedeviled politics in the US today, writes Edward Said



Bill Clinton's definitive victory over Bob Dole is full of paradoxes and contradictions that are well worth exploring. The underlying theme of the Democratic campaign was that Clinton represented the future, whereas Dole — handicapped with almost 25 years of seniority over the incumbent — represented the past or, as the slogan had it, a bridge to the past.

The mystery of the 1996 campaign was why Dole ran at all. A close friend of mine who is an influential figure in Republican Party politics as well as a major donor to its coffers told me that Dole came up to New York late last year to meet with members of the eastern Republican establishment. Apparently he was told by everyone present that he ought not to run, mainly because of his age, but also because against a powerfully attractive and personable and, of course, young incumbent he had no chance of winning. Dole persisted in his insistence regardless. He felt it was his last opportunity to run for president and he wanted to take advantage of it; his years of service had entitled him to that chance, he had the backing of conservatives in the party, and he felt he could raise the money. So he ran, and he lost resoundingly.

Interestingly, however, not all elderly candidates lost. Strom Thurmond, 93, of South Carolina was re-elected to the Senate, as was the ancient reactionary Jesse Helms from North Carolina. Both, but especially Helms, are extreme right-wingers on a vintage that belongs in the 19th century. Although Clinton did not actually get a popular majority (he won about 50 per cent of the direct vote) he did get over 370 electoral votes, about 40 per cent more than he needed to win the election. This majority assures him of a mandate for his second term, even if he must still deal with a Republican House of Representatives and Senate.

About 60 per cent of the voters said that even though they voted for Clinton they did not feel he was either honest or trustworthy. During the 1992 elections he had to face credible charges that he was a philanderer who had used his position as governor of Arkansas to obtain women, hide them, and generally dismiss them or gain their silence once he was done with them. Were it not for Hillary Clinton's willingness then to appear with him — holding his hand — on national television to demonstrate her forgiveness and support, Clinton would have disappeared, as had Gary Hart in the 1988 election because of his affair with Donna Rice.

In addition, the continuing allegations against Bill and Hillary over the Whitewater case (in which numerous financial improprieties were manifestly shown; the Senate Finance Committee headed by Senator Alfonse D'Amato, one of the shadiest characters in the Congress, has mysteriously vowed, however, not to continue hearings after the election even though the special prosecutor remains), the string of disappeared documents, FBI files, dismissals, plus, of course, the suicide two years ago of Vince Foster, Clinton's lawyer and childhood friend, in very mysterious circumstances — all this has greatly tarnished his reputation and undermined his credibility.

But despite xenophobic media attention to Clinton's wealthy Indonesian (usually referred to as "Asian") supporters, his sheer personal charm and enthusiasm for people — in comparison with which Dole's efforts at charm and political ingratiation during the campaign always appeared strained and artificial — carried him through triumphantly. Everything about Clinton's presence suggested victory and success, and he got both in the end.

To liberals, however, Clinton's presidency, particularly since 1995, is a deeply flawed, perhaps irreversibly damaged one. True, he carried with him the revived labour movement (which poured over \$30 million into a campaign enjoining its union members to vote in the first place, and to vote for Clinton in the second) and he still seemed to stand for generally progressive things to voters who really did see in the Re-

publicans a terrifyingly extremist, but all in all very little about Clinton himself as he has become suggests anything but sordid compromise and opportunistic shifts in position.

His status as a symbol of hope for the poor, a significant segment of the African American community, and most of the under-30 population, is partly due to the immense unpopularity of Newt Gingrich, the most unloved figure in American politics today, and the extremism announced by his right-wing revolution in 1994 when the Republicans took over the Congress. Otherwise, Clinton's affable and compelling face-to-face charm won over people to whom, within the narrow confines of the two-party system, he represented the best hope for the next four years.

His campaign itself, however, was far superior to that of Dole who did not seem to have a central theme or message except his unconvincing ratiocinations about cutting taxes. Clinton confined himself to many small initiatives — for example, to allow families a tax rebate for college tuition — that seemed to place him favourably in the otherwise bleak landscape of American electoral politics. It was quite obvious that he had given up the big ideas of reform or vision that had brought him to national prominence and victory in 1992. His strategy was to give up completely on any liberal or progressive social ideas (such as the reform of the health care system, which has left about 40 million Americans without any kind of health insurance) and to try systematically to appeal to elements in the population that were considered to be within the Republican domain: mostly fundamentalist Christians, socially conservative people who decried the existence of "big government", and disaffected middle-class voters who believed that most of their problems were due to welfare recipients (most of whom are, of course, African-American) and high taxes. Cold-bloodedly, Clinton made a point of shifting rightwards in order to appeal to them, thus trading the overwhelming majority of the people that brought him to the presidency in the first place.

American politics today have become a mess of big money, big party machines, and the corruption that comes from the exercise of power. Foreign affairs play a very small part in it, so far as public discussion and debate are concerned. During the campaign, the Middle East only came up once — since US policy towards Israel, the peace process and the Gulf are considered to be above party differences — and that was when Dole was mildly critical of Clinton because he didn't condemn Palestinian violence during the tunnel crisis.

The odd thing is that Dole was always historically much better on the Middle East than almost any other major figure in the Senate. He was publicly critical of Israeli settlement policy, he opposed the move to transfer the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he floated the idea that aid to Israel should be cut, and in 1991 he stood with George Bush on denying the Israelis the \$10 billion in loan guarantees demanded (and finally obtained) by the Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir. For the past year and a half, however, he tried to become even more pro-Israel than Clinton; one wonders, since he had no real chance of winning the election anyway, why he did not in fact remain true to his principles and run an honest campaign, but such are the blandishments offered by the presidency's immense power that candidates will do anything to win. And that is precisely what Clinton did, with devastating results for the American political scene and, it must also be noted, for the rest of the world which depends so heavily on American power and influence.

Two factors seem central: the extraordinary financial resources that can be put into political influence, campaigning and buying silence or compliance, and two, the almost total abdication of the so-called independent media, which has simply become

part of the power structure and has lost any semblance of true autonomy and performance. Certainly one of the main factors in Dole's defeat was his inability to match Clinton's ability to attract and spend huge amounts of money that went into hundreds of television advertisements, numerous organised rallies, and a vast transportation network that comprised not only the presidential 147 but a private train, numerous buses and God knows how many secret service agents, fixers, volunteers, and the like.

So cleverly run was Clinton's campaign (because so well funded, to the tune of almost \$100 million) that he was able to outflank and outmanoeuvre Dole even before Dole was able to say anything. And for each allegation against Clinton's shady financial dealings or suspect morals the Democratic campaign was ready with instant responses, millions of faxes, dozens of spot statements and advertisements. One of the architects of this extraordinary machine was George Stephanopoulos, who has resigned from Clinton's staff and is now reported to be assisting the British Labour Party in the upcoming general elections.

It is, therefore, perfectly obvious to everyone in this country that to win the presidency you have to amass an enormous amount of money and have the sheer willingness, bordering on craziness, to want to cover with your physical presence the country more or less constantly, more or less every day every year. Campaign reform legislation enacted four years ago limits individual direct donations to a candidate to \$1,000 per person and donations to political action committees (that serve a candidate or a cause) to \$5,000. The loopholes in these strictly enforced laws are that you can give any amount of money to a party, and can contribute the price of television advertisements to your heart's content if the ads are not "directly" supervised by the candidate.

Clinton is a genius at fund-raising, having ingratiated himself with every major individual fundraiser and donor in the Democratic Party plus, because he has been willing to trim his programmes to take account of corporate interests, a very wide variety of corporations, lobbyists, foreign governments and private commercial interests. Being a compulsive crowd-pleaser and handshaker — biographies of his early years tell about his kindergarten and grade school Clinton spent most of his time making friends with every member of the school — Clinton is clearly at his best when he is on public display, giving speeches, appearing on television, leading rallies, hosting large dinners, etc.

I recall that last June at my daughter's graduation from Princeton University when Clinton was the commencement speaker, I was impressed with his wit and charm, plus his quick intelligence; somehow one felt that despite the crowd of 10,000 people the president was addressing each one individually. He is, after all, a graduate of Georgetown University and Yale Law School, so in addition to being able to address working-class people, and middle Americans from the south and midwest, he can draw on the sophistication of an Ivy League graduate and comfortably speak to the American elites in their own idiom.

But this kind of versatility on so vast a scale results in a coarsening and reductiveness in the issues that is very depressing. Because he was defending his record, shied by what appears to be an economic upturn, Clinton had to make it seem that Americans never had it so good. And this, in turn, obscured his brazen compromises on the welfare, medical, education and racial

crises that beset the country. True, the Dole campaign tried to keep drawing attention to Clinton's questionable financial background, his philandering, his spotty international record, but it was difficult to keep the country's attention on these matters for very long. In this dereliction the media played an important role, not for what it did, but for what it did not do. All of the major television and newspaper outlets in the US are now owned by 23 corporations, most of them not only enormous but extremely shadowy; interlocking directorates, hidden agreements between corporations, the use of various front or offshore disguises have made any attempt to penetrate or expose this powerful structure almost impossible.

Take the television networks as a small example of what I mean. Famous reporters are members of the same clubs, eat at the same restaurants, make as much (and usually more) money as the politicians, corporation executives, government officials they are supposed to be covering or writing about. Belonging to the same world of power and influence, they are not about to upset their friends and patrons with unpleasant revelations or critical questions. Since General Electric owns NBC it is improbable that a news story implicating the giant corporation in price fixing or overseas corruption would be aired on the network.

Thus critics of the system or of American power like Noam Chomsky are deliberately relegated to the margins, outside the official mainstream of American discourse on America. Lesser journalists who are not quite stars on the scale of Peter Jennings or Dan Rather learn how to be careful in what they say; self-censorship thus guarantees a tired uniformity of opinion. This has been especially maddening concerning the Middle East peace process, in which evidence about the process's unworkability, unfairness, the abuses of Israeli power has done nothing to change public images of the process, which is a semi-official "good thing".

Given these factors, plus the apparently inveterate American preference for always looking to the middle, preferring the tried and true over the new and different, it was a foregone conclusion that even someone like Ross Perot, willing to spend \$1 million of his own money, had very little chance of even defeating Dole. I and all of my family voted for Ralph Nader as a protest vote, but we were also very disappointed at how little effort he made to run a serious election campaign, especially when he vowed not to spend more than \$5,000 on his candidacy, a suicidal move if there ever was one. None of us could bring ourselves to vote for Clinton, whose egregious pandering to the pro-Israeli vote has been nauseating. Nader is still an estimable, and even an admirable figure; he ran as a Green Party candidate but seemed increasingly remote as the campaign wore on, and then finally disappeared. It was disappointing that the number of votes he got was not even mentioned in the media until four days after the election. So much for independent candidates.

Yet one of the most fascinating aspects of the Clinton presidency has been Hillary's role in it, about which a great deal can be said. Suffice it for me to say here that it was clear from the changes in her appearance (she has now been condemned to soft pastel shades in dresses, and an almost totally inoffensive presence) and her greatly diminished visibility, that her husband's various fixers and managers have decided that she is altogether too remarkable and assertive a personality to continue as she has been for most of the past three and a half years. The new Hillary is a subordinate, sugary creature who has been re-fashioned to suit the basic misogyny of this society. Forgotten now are her roles as her husband's tougher, more principled other self. I doubt that we will be seeing as much of her as we once did.

Blacks, not women, tipped the vote in Clinton's favour, writes Garland Thompson

Republicans win some, lose more

Political analysts, struggling to understand the startling turnaround in President Bill Clinton's fortunes after his Democratic Party was swept out of Congress in 1994, have pointed to a "gender gap". Women voters, disgruntled at Republican-led assaults on the right to abortions and at Republican-led opposition to human services programmes, were more likely to vote for Clinton and the Democrats than for the Republicans in the US presidential elections earlier this month.

After Clinton's victory, the *New York Times* and other major dailies said that the Republicans simply misunderstood their mandate. Two years ago, public dissatisfaction with Clinton's leadership was evident, after the shredding of Clinton's health-care reform proposals, the blocking of his attempts to "invest in people" with new government programmes in his first two years in office and after a badly thought-out attempt to reshape military policies regarding homosexuals.

Once in control of Congress, the Republicans ran away from the political centre, rushing to enact a "Contract with America" that many Americans found insensitive and mean-spirited. It attacked provisions to aid the weakest, most dependent of citizens, the children. Rhetoric about how social welfare programmes destroyed initiative and acted as a drag on the economy didn't help. Thus Clinton was able to label the Republicans "extremists", and to make that a more damaging label than the "liberal" label Bob Dole and the Republicans tried to hang on him.

That's a good answer, and it works well for many in the US. But a look at the current population statistics, and at the trends projected into the next century, shows that the Republicans' words on race came back to haunt them.

African Americans cast 83 per cent of their votes for Bill Clinton and Al Gore, but only 12 per cent for Dole and his running mate, Jack Kemp. Latinos cast 72 per cent of their votes for Clinton-Gore and only 21 per cent for Dole-Kemp.

Want to know what happened? Blame the Republicans' own race-tinged attacks on affirmative action — "racial preferences" is the term they used to pass a sweeping revocation of civil-rights protection in California — and on their ugly attacks on immigrants. Ask any American about "illegal aliens", and the picture of an illicit Mexican border-crosser sneaks into view.

Proposition 187, another California initiative written in deny education and health benefits to children of illegal immigrants, shook Hispanic communities across the country. Mexican Americans, who live mostly in California and other parts of the southwest, had believed the Republicans offered them a better deal than the Democrats. But not more.

What is happening is a dramatic result of the late President Richard Nixon's "southern strategy" for



United States President Bill Clinton (left) gives the thumbs up to a large crowd of Australian admirers upon his arrival in Sydney, 19 November, beginning a five-day visit to the continent-nation down under. Clinton was accompanied by the governor-general of Australia, Sir William Deane (photo: AP)

minimizing the racial divide and winning the White House: play to the racial sensibilities of a south still angry over federal intervention on civil rights and to the widespread ears of whites across the country that racial integration will mean a government-driven black takeover of jobs, housing and political clout from whites who had worked hard to earn those things. Play to the west's anger over federal control of vast land tracts, over stringent environmental regulation putting brakes on rapacious development of the remaining wilderness areas and over the huge Hispanic influx. Simple demographics mean that whites, who outnumber all other racial groups, will continue to elect Republicans.

"I think we have just delivered the south to the Republican Party for a long time," Democrat President Lyndon Johnson said when he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Look at the map of the 1996 election results. Clinton won the southern states of Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. Dole won most of the solid south: Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama, as well as Texas and Okla-

homa, southwestern states which have many of the south's characteristics.

But the racial divide bodes ill for Republicans in the future because of the same simple demographics. Black Americans are already more than 31 million strong and their birth rate continues to outperform the national average. Latinos are more than 22 million strong and their combined rates of immigration and birth are what the Republicans are worried about. Asians, America's fastest-growing minority, have exceeded six million, and their newly awakened consciousness of the benefits of affirmative action and other civil-rights protection means they are as threatened as other immigrants over Proposition 187. Arab Americans reached the three million mark before the 1990 census and their population is growing as well, thanks to US immigration law's strong policy of family support.

Keeping count? That's more than 62 million Americans who call themselves people of colour. Demographers say whites will be a minority sometime after the first third of the 21st century. So a Republican Party pushing an us-versus-them agenda is

bound to be defeated in national elections. Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke found that out in Louisiana's governor's race, as did the Republicans opponent of Democratic Senator-elect Mary Landreau on 5 November.

That is because Republican rhetoric has divided the rest of the country down the middle. Clinton won 49 per cent of the votes of white women, while Dole garnered 42 per cent. White men cast 48 per cent of their votes for Dole, versus 39 per cent for Clinton. People of colour cast the swing votes.

When the Republicans' southern strategy pits region against region, especially attacking the populous east, where 40 per cent of all Americans live, they risk rejection every time. Thus, when the Republicans, led by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, unify the northeast and the upper midwest — America's industrial heartlands — with attacks on government programmes that benefit them, the stage is set. Television watchers following Cable News Network's election coverage could see it play across the country. Before the polls had closed in the west, even before Texas' votes were counted, Clinton had won re-election.

It will take some time before the Democrats, by default the party of diversity, realise their true advantage. They are so focused on evading the tag of "liberal" they have grasped the new reality. It may take even longer before the Republicans, focused on being the party of white flight, understand the danger looming before them. They will have to lose many more statewide races, for governor's offices, for control of state legislatures and for control of the US Congress, in addition to the big-city mayor's races they have been losing since the late 1960s.

Proposition 187, which was passed in California and then held in abeyance by the courts, and its sibling proposals in the Congress, will keep immigrant communities agitated as long as Republicans keep pushing. Attacks on civil rights, even under code words like "race preferences" or nostalgia for a "return" to a "colourblind society," will do the same for blacks.

The question is how long it will take the rest of America to wake up to those dramatically new facts of life.

The writer, editor of US Black Engineer magazine, is former editor of *The Crisis* and *The Philadelphia Tribune*, the US's oldest African-American magazine and newspaper. He has served as commentator for the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Dini for EUROFOR



In an exclusive interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini spoke to Gamal Nkrumah and sought to give EUROFOR a good name

Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring stole the show at MENA III with his counsel to Israel to stick to the land-for-peace formula. But Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, perhaps suspecting that for countries like Italy and Ireland acquiring a high profile in international diplomacy is a barely attainable goal, concentrated instead on more modest, behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Dini also had a go at alleviating fears in the southern Mediterranean of the northerners' plans to secure the stability of the tension-ridden area.

Last Saturday, Italy together with France, Spain, and Portugal officially set up a multinational European force, called EUROFOR, with headquarters in the central Italian city of Florence. Italian Defence Minister Beniamino Andreatta said that EUROFOR will, if the need arises, have 15,000 troops at its disposal.

EUROFOR raised consternation in several southern Mediterranean nations. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi denounced EUROFOR as a "declaration of war against the Arab states south of the Mediterranean." EUROFOR was tantamount to a "terrorist act and a threat to peace in the Mediterranean region," Gaddafi said. Tunisian Defence Minister Habib Ben Yahia also attacked the force because it was set up "without the states of the south coast of the Mediterranean being consulted." Ben Yahia added that EUROFOR was "incompatible with the traditions of dialogue and talks which Tunisia is seeking to establish between the two sides of the Mediterranean."

How do you respond to these criticisms, I asked Dini. "I am very glad that you raised this question because there is no deployment of any forces," he replied. He added that the concept of EUROFOR is designed to promote humanitarian, peacekeeping and crisis-management operations. "A year ago, the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea thought that it would be a positive development if they could cooperate among themselves in such matters as responding quickly to crises and humanitarian issues in the Mediterranean area. We do not intend to take any military action against anyone. We want to act together if the need arises and the northern Mediterranean countries might be called upon by the European Union to perform certain duties in peace or humanitarian missions — not military intervention — in the Mediterranean area or other neighbouring regions. These countries intend to work together and operate together in these kind of initiatives," Dini told the *Weekly*.

"We are very, very sorry that this initiative was seen by some as some kind of military machine that is being created and is turned against the southern Mediterranean. We are surprised that some people are responding now because the initiative was launched over a year ago. And I believe that all the countries of the southern Mediterranean had been consulted on this matter," he said.

Libya, a former Italian colony, is particularly sensitive to what it sees as Western bullying. "We are in a position to clarify what the purpose is and what the intentions are," Dini asserted. "There shouldn't be any worry. I can assure you neither Italy, nor any other of our partners in the northern Mediterranean, has any militaristic designs in the region."

He added, "I also delivered a clear message to President Mubarak to clarify any lingering doubts about our intentions and remove any fears." So will there be regular consultations with the southern Mediterranean countries? "Absolutely. Look, there is nothing new in terms of security and military action in the Mediterranean," Dini said.

What is the Italian and European role in the Middle East peace process? "We do not take military initiatives. As you know, we only take diplomatic initiatives," Dini said. "Europe, the 15 countries of the EU, are the main trading partners of the countries of the region and particularly Israel. Europe is also the major donor to the Palestinians and other countries of the region with the notable exception of Israel. Therefore, the peace process needs the contribution of Europe. Europe can play a bigger role through the appointment of a special representative to the Middle East. Of course, the negotiations are bilateral — between Israel and the Palestinians — but European diplomatic action will facilitate the bilateral talks between Israel and the Arab nations," Dini said. "I can tell you that the European envoy has been well received by both the Palestinian National Authority and the Israelis."



UN-professional

With the 1996 US elections now a thing of the past, one would expect that the Clinton administration's bid to remove UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali would have been abandoned. It was, after all, one of the many Republican campaign platform points that the Democrats usurped as their own to secure a victory. Not so.

The struggle with the Republicans is still on-going, with Clinton now striving to put across a bipartisan agenda in order to win support from the Republican-led Congress. To that end, he has found it more than acceptable to target the integrity and accomplishments of a man who is second only to Sweden's Dag Hammarskjöld in terms of garnering the approval of the international community while holding this key UN post. Is this an indication of the kind and quality of policy making that we can expect from Clinton during his second term?

Perhaps. Or at least as long as Clinton needs to placate Congress. But for now, with the US already \$1.4 billion in arrears on UN dues, Clinton must cover up the US's role in undermining the effectiveness of the UN by attempting to hold for ransom the fulfilment of its commitments in exchange for a sacrifice to appease the Republican purse-string masters.

Never mind that the UN was founded with a mandate which placed it above the hegemonic desires of any one nation — particularly one that is the UN's biggest debtor. Never mind that every member of the international community believes that Boutros-Ghali has more than lived up to, and executed with honour, the responsibilities of his office. And never mind the fact that the UN's power is restricted by the level of support its member-states are willing to provide — meaning that any failure, such as in Somalia, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, can be attributed to the key powers themselves.

In fact, it may be best to forget everything that the UN stands for, given that the structure of the new post-Cold War era that prevails, at least in the eyes of Washington, is one where blatant attacks on the dignity and integrity of the international community, and the organisation which seeks to uphold these values, are the order of the day.

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United Kingdom

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Regionalism on the Likud agenda

Not only Arabs are divided over regional economic integration. The subject is a divisive issue among Israelis as well, where Likud would rather integrate with Europe, writes Taha Abdel-Alim

Israel's choice to become integrated in the Middle East was one prompted by the initial success of the peace process. However, whatever marginal gains it garnered from such a move have been all-but-negated by its obstruction of the peace process as a result of its tendency to view itself as an extraordinary state seeking regional hegemony. Israel also views itself as "the oasis of democracy" in the Middle East, a self-perception that has caused it to distance itself from other countries of the region on the grounds that it claims to be a developed, highly-industrialised nation-state identifying with the West.

During the Likud's leadership of the Israeli government under Yitzhak Shamir in 1992, David Levy, extensively described the benefits to be reaped by Israel's neighbours from sharing in Israel's expansive experience in a wide range of technical and agricultural fields. The same self-assured tone prevailed in the majority of Israeli communiqués and documents submitted during various multilateral negotiations and regional economic conferences. While the benefits from such cooperation, irrespective of the fact that they would ultimately be more valuable to Israel, would be great, Levy seemed to ignore the basic fact that without a pledge to withdraw from occupied Arab lands, this offer would be futile. Moreover, Levy's statements made no mention of regional economic integration, a shortcoming that is seemingly part and parcel of the Likud platform. In short, his assertions highlight Likud's inability to understand that only a just and comprehensive peace will pave the way for promoting regional economic development and integration.

The platform of the Labour Party, as early as January 1992 when Likud's Shamir was prime

minister and Shimon Peres was minister of finance, differed from that of Likud substantially. Peres, alluding to the high cost of Israel's occupation of Arab lands, further emphasised that power and wealth cannot be realised through regional expansion but through scientific progress. Consequently, he urged that to build peace, all elements which obstruct its course must be eliminated, including territorial disputes. Peres' ideas were quickly picked up by Yitzhak Rabin's government, which then sought to bring to an end the Arab economic boycott of Israel. Rabin's government sought to make optimum use of the drive for peace and the optimism that followed the conclusion of the Oslo Accords.

Although the Arabs remained sceptical about the apparent policy shift, progress was made along the lines of normalising economic relations with Israel. The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council lifted the second and third stages of their economic boycott of Israel. Oman and Israel expanded their relations. Israel opened an economic representation office in Qatar, and the latter agreed to do the same in Israel. A peace accord, which included economic and non-economic cooperation, was signed by Jordan and Israel, and relations with Egypt continued to grow.

The air of mistrust and wariness, however, prevailed, even through the 1994 Casablanca Economic Conference and the 1995 Amman Conference. During these two meetings, Israel's aim of single-handedly reaping the fruits of cooperation and normalisation became evident, irrespective of the pace of the peace process or complete compliance with existing peace agreements. These meetings, coupled with the controversy over Israel's refusal to sign the Nu-

clear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), betrayed Israel's designs, buttressed by the US, to take hold of the economic and political reins of power in the region, thus marginalising the other key Arab players.

It is under this same cloud of political tension that the third Middle East/North Africa Economic Conference (MENA III) was held last week in Cairo. To blame for the tension are the hard-line policies of Netanyahu's Likud-run government which, since last June, has succeeded in delaying any tangible progress in the peace process. In this light, it is clear that any strides toward regional economic cooperation and normalisation hinge on the realisation of a comprehensive peace as laid out in existing accords, resolutions and treaties.

Unfortunately, Labour and Likud approach the issue of normalisation and integration from opposing perspectives. Likud plans focus on integrating Israel into Europe, while those of Labour target integrating the country into the Middle East. Likud's platform, however, is riddled with inconsistencies.

During the 14th Knesset elections, the Likud, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, declared in its programme that "Israel will pursue its efforts to attain full and mutual recognition with those Arab states with which it has no relations yet, to establish full relations with states with which it has a lower level of relations and to accord particular attention to its relations with Morocco, Tunisia and the Gulf States." But the programme itself is fraught with elements which impede the development of normalisation and cooperation in Arab-Israeli relations. The programme asserts that "Jerusalem is the undivided capital of the State of Israel", provides for the closure of offices of the Palestinian ad-

ministration, including Orient House, endorses the expansion of Jewish settlements and calls for ending the Labour-imposed freeze on settlement activity, opposes the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and calls for Israel's control of the vital water resources in Judea and Samaria — the Hebrew name for the West Bank.

Despite the programme's recognition of "the facts created on land by the various agreements", Netanyahu highlighted what he calls "the need to reduce the dangers created by the agreements which threaten the future and security of Israel". In other words, this meant that Israel would refrain from implementing its previous commitments. Thus, under the slogan: "Security is the basis for permanent peace in the region", the Likud programme overlooked the fact that the conclusion of peace agreements and the normalisation of relations with the Arab countries was contingent on Israel's commitment to the peace agreements already concluded and to the "land for peace" principle.

The Likud programme is decidedly focused on promoting Israeli ties to the US and Europe. Under this programme, Israel aims to join the European Community and is seeking to integrate itself into the European market. In contrast with the Labour programme, the Likud programme is void of any mention of economic cooperation in the Middle East, and is similar to programmes adopted by other parties in the coalition government presided over by Netanyahu. This is no basis for regional economic integration.

The writer is deputy director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

Intellectuals and politics

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed discusses Edward Said's criticism of intellectuals who subscribe to the notion that politics can be perceived as the 'art of the possible'

In an article published in *Al-Ahram Weekly* on 7 November under the title "Intellectuals and the crisis", Edward Said wrote that "Mohamed Sid-Ahmed said in his article (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, issue 297) about the debate over the current crisis that politics... is the art of the possible... I myself think that is a disastrous course; it has brought us to a situation where no values or principles are maintained, since being effective, influential, mainstream and acceptable are the main criteria for action, with the further consequence that the intellectual is guided not by his/her sense of the truth of the situation, but by considerations of the 'possible'." I am somewhat surprised that Edward Said chose to see in my use of the definition of politics as the art of the possible an apology for subordinating intellectual integrity to political expediency. Nevertheless, he has raised an issue that bears looking into more closely.

The issue is in essence the degree of independence of the intellectual vis-à-vis the power establishment. According to Edward Said, the intellectual who accommodates his logic to fit the requirements of a given situation betrays a 'pragmatic' approach towards that establishment and exposes himself to inconsistencies and contradictions. This is why politics as the 'art of the possible' is described by Edward Said as 'a disastrous course'.

While not denying the consistency of his logic, nor that the expression 'art of the possible' can be read in those terms, I maintain that in certain conditions the expression can carry a very different meaning, especially in the context of the underdeveloped world whose political structure differs fundamentally from the one in which Edward Said lives and operates.

Let us begin with the undeclared duality that is an integral feature of our contemporary world, a world where the bipolarity between East and West has been replaced by one between North

and South. The values to which the North attributes itself, notably those of democracy and human rights, now serve as the dominant frame of reference throughout the world. In the south, however, it is more a question of paying lip service to those values than of actually implementing them. Examples abound to prove that societies in the south do not apply democratic rules, nor, for that matter, human rights, the way they are defined in the North.

One explanation for the failure of most societies in the south to adopt democracy lies in what has come to be called the North-South divide, an imaginary line separating developed from underdeveloped societies in the world today, and the different perspective from which each side of the divide looks at the issue of development. For the developed societies of the North, they are in a race against themselves, so to speak, their aspirations for greater development shaped by reference to their own record of achievement, not according to an external model. For the underdeveloped societies of the South, in counterpart, progress is a question of catching up with the North; it is decided upon not in terms of considerations dictated by their own reality, but by reference to external criteria.

This phenomenon has driven many schools of political thought in underdeveloped societies to become totalitarian, and to regard the opinion of the political opponent as an impediment, rather than an enriching, factor in the race to catch up. For nationalists (in our case, pan-Arab nationalists), only nationalism (viz. pan-Arabism), can fulfil the role of a societal awakening; for progressives, only they are endowed with a scientific methodology capable of orienting social development; for the religious, only religion is a valid frame of reference. It is a situation in which democracy is an armistice between conflicting trends rather than a basic value. Each

party iterates the existence of the others only to the extent necessary for the others to tolerate him.

This logic is widespread in the Third World and cannot be said to be the monopoly of one specific school of thought. It is exclusive neither to the party in power nor to the opposition parties, but extends in them all. Though politically opposed to the party in power, opposition parties reproduce its structure organisationally, albeit on a smaller scale. There is no room in such a structure for the independent intellectual who dares move out of standardised patterns of behaviour. This is where the notion of political action as the 'art of the possible' comes up, with greater emphasis on the word 'art' than on the word 'possible'. 'Art' here means developing creative devices to widen the scope of what is 'possible'. It introduces a dimension of freedom in an otherwise closed system, and implies neither pragmatism, ie, surrender to the status quo, nor political behaviour that is unprincipled or unethical.

Actually, there is a fundamental difference between democracy with accountability and 'democracy' without. The test of whether accountability exists or not is how free elections are. In the absence of this freedom, authority becomes absolute, participation becomes instrumentalisation, and independent creative thinking is marginalised. One example of the art of the possible is to achieve the seemingly impossible, such as the bringing down of the Berlin Wall, or the other similarly formidable walls, even if only psychological. It is an experience that those who have never lived behind such a wall cannot fully appreciate. When all is said and done, however, Edward Said's remarks were useful in that they raised an issue of paramount importance which needs to be widely debated.

MENA's simple truth

By Naguib Mahfouz

I had no intention of making predictions about MENA III before it took place but now that it is over I can confidently say that the conference was a success and that Egypt gained much from it. Had Egypt only benefited from the gigantic contracts that were negotiated, valued at some \$10 billion, that would have been enough.

This conference, though, had the added advantage of illustrating the undisputed status of Cairo as the region's financial capital. Just compare the results of the two previous economic conferences in Casablanca and Amman to the results of the Cairo conference and I think you will see the difference between events that were essentially parochial and one that was truly international.

There were many who objected to the holding of the Cairo conference for fear it would give Israel a foothold in the Arab trading world whilst simultaneously blocking progress in the peace process. In actual fact the exact opposite took place. Some Israelis publicly disapproved of their country's position, making declarations to the foreign press, while Netanyahu and his government seem to have been subjected to unprecedented pressures during the course of a conference that resoundingly echoed President Mubarak's assertion of simple truth: economic growth in the region can only be achieved in an atmosphere of peace and security.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Samir.

The Press This Week

Al-Ahram: "It is now clear that President Mubarak is the only leader in the peace arena who does not lose patience or his nerve. He allows nothing to swerve him from his objective of achieving peace, development and prosperity. To this end the Cairo economic conference... was a success and Cairo emerged from it strong, steadfast and full of confidence in itself and the future." (Mohamed Abdel-Moneim, 17 November)

Rose El-Youssef: "Opportunities and risks are key words in the vocabulary of businessmen. Many have undoubtedly discovered that their opportunity in the Middle East can be achieved without Israel, which is not the centre of the universe. This is what the Arabs and the Europeans have said to the unanimous applause of the delegates." (Mahmoud El-Maraghi, 18 November)

Al-Akhbar: "Cairo has succeeded in restoring balance to the Middle Eastern project — Israel has become merely a participating nation in this regional order and not a dominant one. Had Cairo listened to all those opposed to the conference it would have lost its position and role in the region and would have had in put up with a marginal role away from the limelight." (Said Soudki, 14 November)

Al-Ahali: "The media fanfare that has surrounded the (MENA III) conference has turned it into a wedding procession, in which Israel is the bridegroom. Of all places, this is taking place in Cairo, which seems to be overlooking the fact that the so-called 'regional cooperation' is at its expense and the expense of its role, so long as it remains the capital of the Arabs... This was the message relayed by the Egyptian opposition as it called for the denunciation of the Cairo conference and its boycott. It realises that the ordinary Arab citizen knows that this conference is not in his interest, now or in the future." (Lufti Waked, 13 November)

Al-Wafd: "The political harvest of the Cairo economic conference is no less important than its economic returns. If Egypt has succeeded in signing deals with investors worth \$10 billion, it has also succeeded in coming Israel down to size. Israel's role was greatly reduced at the Cairo Conference with its delegation being cold-shouldered by the Arab delegations. This is because of the stupidity

MENA III evaluated

of the role of Israel who refuses to honour international commitments." (Garnal Badawi, 17 November)

Al-Shaab: "The (MENA III) conference was held to affirm the Middle East project with Israel at its centre. Any attempt by officials to deny this will not succeed. Cooperation among the Arabs or between the Arabs and the rest of the world can occur outside the conference. Within the conference there can be no regional cooperation without the participation of Israel. It opens the doors wide to normalisation... They lie and claim that this conference is for international economic cooperation, not particularly with Israel. Who are they deceiving, the people or themselves?" (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 12 November)

Al-Arabi: "During the conference, Egypt could well try to limit the Israeli role or to take advantage of the fact that it was being held on its soil in attract investments or even to talk about the importance of inter-Arab cooperation. All these were points won by Egyptian diplomacy but it lost its basic bargaining card — the threat to halt regional cooperation." (Abdallah El-Sinnawi, 18 November)

Al-Ahram: "By any standards the Cairo economic conference was a big success. Egypt succeeded in efficiently organising it and in promoting itself as an ideal venue for investment. The Arabs succeeded in laying inter-Arab cooperation as the basis for regional cooperation and upset Israel's plan to become the dominant nation in the region. And the world was able to say clearly that it is essential to link regional cooperation with achieving a just, comprehensive peace." (Mohamed Basha, 18 November)

Al-Gomhuriya: "If the Likud leaders in Israel had the ability to evaluate the current situation accurately, they would have rushed to change their extremist stances. The Cairo economic conference proved that the international atmosphere is for peace; nations must continue to exist and future generations look towards a better life. Any obstacle to this will be met with the solid will of the majority, forcing the minority to follow the right path." (Samir Ragab, 13 November)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



Egypt celebrates Children's Day on 20 November, and the face of Suzanne Mubarak, as the head of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, is closely linked with this occasion. I draw a childlike expression; a shy glance, the curve of her smile softening the lines of her cheekbones. Yet her face in the illustration remains pensive, as it is when she listens closely, with empathy and affection, to a handicapped child.

Close up

Salama A. Salama

The Israeli illusion

Beyond doubt MENA III scored tremendous successes in stimulating economic projects and in promoting investment opportunities in Egypt. Equally beyond doubt is the fact that the peace process has reached a critical stage, one which has disturbed those regional leaders and political figures who backed the process from its beginnings. For the Cairo conference has succeeded, once and for all, in illustrating that a just and peaceful settlement with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon is the only possible basis for future cooperation with Israel.

Recently President Mubarak has issued repeated statements, directed at international powers and, more specifically, the parties responsible for paralyzing the peace process, indicating his concern over the possible ramifications of Netanyahu's continuing refusal to honour agreements already made, a refusal that cannot have anything other than a negative impact on Arab public opinion and which could, conceivably, put back the peace agreements — in place for 14 years — between Israel and Egypt.

Egypt has clearly declared its commitment to peace as a strategic choice. But in response to such declarations Netanyahu's government embarked on a series of misleading actions that seem far from conducive to encouraging progress in the peace process. Among such actions was the Israeli announcement that agreement with the Palestinians over the Hebron issue was imminent only for it to be discovered that Israel had added new conditions to the Hebron agreement signed by the Palestinians and the previous Peres government, complicating matters still further.

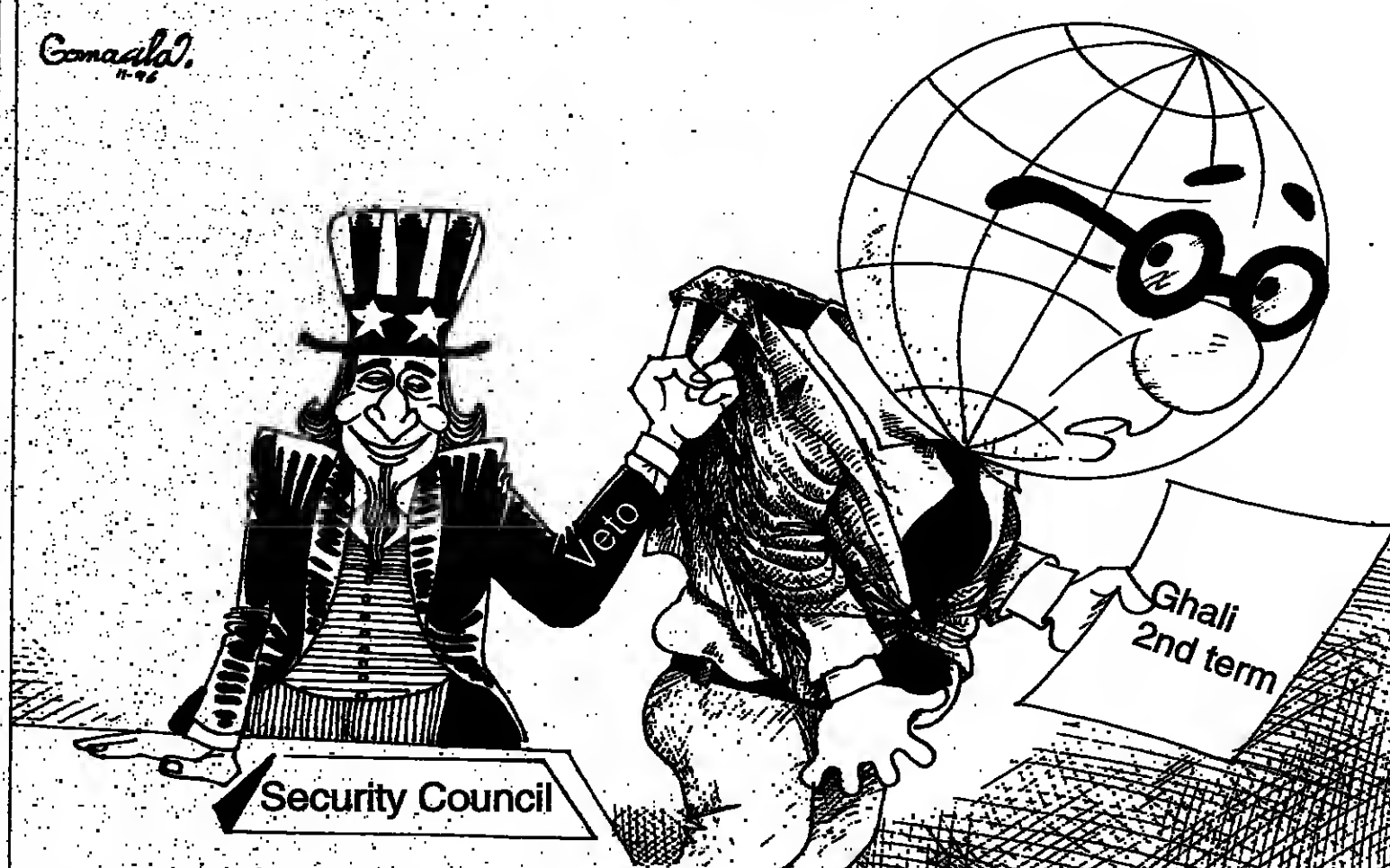
Netanyahu, sinking ever deeper in a mire of misrepresentation based on deception, then announced that he had cancelled his trip to America in order to speed up the new Hebron agreement. His lie was exposed when Denis Ross left after failing to get the two sides to agree, and Shimon Peres went on to expose the Likud stand on the peace process completely, leading to increased authority to those who claim that Netanyahu has adopted the same policies of procrastination and procrastination in which Shamir became mired.

Netanyahu and his government appear to be hostages to the Israeli right, which violently objects to implementing the Hebron agreement and which has mobilised the settlers to demonstrate in order to increase the pressure on Netanyahu. This led to hoisting a trial balloon, another illusion — the possibility of setting up a coalition government of the Likud and the Labour Party.

Most analysts consider that the differences between Likud and Labour, Netanyahu and Peres — over Hebron, final negotiations, the ending of settlement building, the reopening of discussions with Syria — are too great to allow for a coalition. One thing though is for sure — any such coalition could only beget further procrastination and procrastination.

But what raises most doubts and deepens pessimism over the peace process is the fact that the belief America would be firmer with Israel following the elections appears increasingly to have been unfounded. Unless Netanyahu's government radically changes its position with regard to the Hebron issue, hopes for peace remain blowing in the wind.

Comasala



Ghali's better option

Boutros-Ghali's insistence on running for another term as UN secretary-general can only result in a pyrrhic victory, writes Mohamed Hassanein Heikal

Offering unsolicited advice is a thankless business, especially when the advice is contrary to what the person wants to hear — perhaps even to what he believes is his best interest. It becomes still more awkward when the advice is given at a moment of crisis in that person's life, when he expects his friends either to back him unreservedly or to hold their silence. This is the uncomfortable position I find myself in as I venture to suggest to UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali that he should announce, without hesitation or regret, his intention not to seek a second term in office, nor, a fortiori, to accept to stay on for half a term.

I want to state for the record that I was delighted when he was elected secretary-general in November 1991. In the first place, he is a friend and colleague who worked with me at Al-Ahram for 18 years. Secondly, I was happy to see an Egyptian at the helm of the international organisation for the first time in its history. My third reason for welcoming the news was a little more complicated. Boutros-Ghali is a Copt, an Egyptian Christian. Before his election as UN Secretary-General, I believed he deserved to be named Egypt's foreign minister in the context of the country's current political orientation. Yet the post remained unattractively out of his reach — not because his eligibility was in question, but because it was feared that the appointment of a Christian to such a sensitive position would anger Egypt's Islamic fundamentalists.

To my mind, the fear was misplaced, or at least exaggerated. The Copts in Egypt, while remaining true to their own faith, are content to live by the country's Arab behavioural norms and value system. Indeed, they have contributed to creating its cultural framework, which derives much of its essence from Islam. The Islamic dimension of Egypt's identity is accepted by the Coptic community's leaders and thinkers. As a kind of compromise, Boutros-Ghali was appointed minister of state for foreign affairs, a post separated from that of full foreign minister by a thin line. That is why I was happy when the man who had, through no fault of his own, failed to achieve the recognition he craved from his own country, succeeded in achieving recognition beyond his wildest dreams from the outside world.

Although he did consider other international posts, once putting his name forward as a candidate for the top slot in UNESCO, another time contending for the presidency of the Organisation for African Unity (both times unsuccessfully), Boutros-Ghali never aspired to the post of UN secretary-general. Indeed, he owed his nomination to pure chance. He himself told me the story of how this came about. He was in Kinshasa to attend a meeting of African foreign ministers charged by their heads of state with selecting an African candidate for the post of UN secretary-general. It was widely accepted that it was now Africa's turn to occupy the post, which had hitherto rotated between Europe (Norway's Trygve Lie, Sweden's Dag Hammarskjöld, Austria's Kurt Waldheim), Asia (Myanmar's U Thant) and Latin America (Chile's Javier Perez de Cuellar).

To cover the eventuality of last-minute objections to their candidate by the Security Council, the African heads of state hedged their bets by instructing their foreign ministers to nominate not just one but five prominent African personalities. At a meeting attended by Zaire's president, Mobutu Sese Seko, a list of five names was put forward which did not include the name of Boutros-Ghali. Suddenly, Mobutu turned to the Egyptian minister and asked him: "Pierre, why don't you consider adding your name to the list, even if this brings the number up to six?" Although taken completely by surprise, Boutros-Ghali quickly rose to the occasion, telling Mobutu that, while his mandate from the Egyptian government did not include putting his own name on the list, he believed there would be no objections if he did. He reassured Zaire's president that he would call President Mubarak to obtain official permission, but was unable to reach the president from Kinshasa. He decided to go along with Mobutu's suggestion anyway, estimating that if for any reason the Egyptian president objected, he could always have his name removed.

As it happened, Mubarak was not too happy about the idea. He felt his minister of state's chances of winning enough votes to carry the day were slim, and was loathe to expose an Egyptian candidate to the risk of failure. But Boutros-Ghali convinced the president to back his nomination, and Mubarak obliged by writing personally to a number of African, Asian and other leaders. Once he got the green light from Mubarak, Boutros-Ghali launched a full-fledged electoral campaign for the first time in the history of the UN secretariat.

Like all electoral campaigns, it involved backstairs deals, influence-peddling and the formation of alliances and fronts. Boutros-Ghali was the candidate of the Francophone bloc, a group of former French colonies linked by common cultural ties that France was trying to mobilise into a political power base. This did not sit too well with the United States, which was backing the African candidates from the Anglo-Saxon bloc, namely Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Chidzero and former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo. The polarisation grew sharper, with the Qatari Doha and other French power centres lobbying energetically for Boutros-Ghali, and US diplomacy countering with a campaign against the Egyptian candidate. Washington objected to Boutros-Ghali on three main counts. First among these was his age. Born in 1921, he was 70 when he presented his candidacy.

The second objection involved his country. Precedent dictated that the UN secretary-

general should come from a country not involved in acute regional crises — a condition that did not apply to Egypt.

His qualifications were the third stumbling block. The new realities that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Gulf War entailed a total re-assessment and restructuring of the United Nations. This was a massive task, calling for the skills of a top-notch administrator and, while Boutros-Ghali was a respected academic, he had no administrative experience to speak of.

Despite the US's strong opposition to Boutros-Ghali, luck was on his side. Many factors worked in his favour: he had the support of the African lobby, which had nominated him in the first place, of the Francophone bloc, which had its own reasons for standing strongly behind him; and, last but not least, of the 23 country-strong Arab bloc, which adopted his cause as its own. Moreover, as the Egyptian minister who had volunteered to accompany former President Anwar El-Sadat on his famous visit to Jerusalem in 1977 — when Egypt's then foreign minister resigned to protest the visit and his chosen successor was reluctant to step into his shoes — Boutros-Ghali enjoyed the support of an influential Jewish lobby. An added advantage was that, as a Christian from a Muslim country who had a Jewish wife, Boutros-Ghali could do whatever mantle sat best with the interlocutor he happened to be addressing at any given time.

But for all that, his victory was far from certain when polling began in the Security Council. In the run-up to the election, an intricate game of canvassing, of manoeuvres and counter-maneuvres, was played out in the wings as members sought to improve their preferred candidate's chances. As it turned out, an unexpectedly large number voted for Boutros-Ghali, less because they wanted him to win than with the aim of bringing down other candidates they considered more threatening. Boutros-Ghali, until then seen as a dark horse running against enormous odds, defeated 13 candidates to emerge victorious in the ballot held on 21 November 1991.

After his surprise win — and no one was more surprised than Boutros-Ghali himself — the new secretary-general was acutely enough to realise that his first battle would be to win Washington's trust. To that end, he set about allaying his fears about his age, announcing formally that he intended to step down after only one five-year term, and pledging not to run for a second. His first report — the famous document issued on 31 January 1992, titled "Agenda for Peace", which contained such expressions as "con-

flict prevention", "conflict management", "preventive diplomacy" and "peacekeeping" — was written in the political planning section of the US State Department. Moreover, Boutros-Ghali was careful not to upset the balance of power prevailing in the United Nations.

Thus he allowed the United States to use the United Nations as a shield for its activities, sending its troops into Somalia and Haiti — and later pulling them out — under the UN flag, and continuing to impose sanctions against Iraq in the name of the United Nations. He also accommodated western Europe, which first entered Bosnia on a UN peacekeeping mission, although these forces were later replaced by EU and finally NATO forces. In general, Boutros-Ghali adroitly avoided confrontation on even the most sensitive issues. For example, he refrained from publishing the full UN report on the Qana massacre in southern Lebanon last April. Even the watered-down version only saw the light of day because some of the findings of the investigation committee were leaked to a number of European newspapers. This did not prevent the Arab press from heaping praise on Boutros-Ghali for going public with the report.

But to paraphrase the adage, anyone who tries to keep everybody happy all the time is doomed to fail. So it went with Boutros-Ghali, who came to realise that it was a juggling act beyond the abilities of any one man, however flexible he was willing to be. France was trying to play a much bigger role in North Africa and the Middle East as well as in the Balkans, than its real weight in the international community warranted. Problems were becoming more complicated, and hidden struggles among the various powers more acute. Halfway through Boutros-Ghali's term in office, the usual speculations began about whether his mandate would be extended.

The United States made it clear that it would stand against any such extension, invoking the pledge Boutros-Ghali had made immediately after his election to stand down after completing one term. A compromise suggested by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher was that his term be extended by one or two extra years, to spare him the humiliation of being the first secretary-general in the history of the United Nations to serve

Soapbox

Laurels for the loser

Boutros-Ghali may have lost his position as secretary-general of the United Nations, but he did not lose his integrity. He compelled the United States to use the veto in its efforts to defeat him. Some people advised Ghali to withdraw and spare himself a losing battle with Washington. This advice was justified in part; but on the other hand, the fact that the US used the veto means that the wave of opposition to its decision required extreme measures. Boutros-Ghali's re-election was the focal point around which dissatisfaction with the status quo crystallised. He did not stand alone in his battle; he became a symbol of the majority of the international community. This bloc supported Ghali till the end, knowing all the while that it would also lose. But what is the point of surrendering without resistance?

The US seeks to further strengthen its position of global dominance, regardless of the world community's choice. Washington's military allies do not mutely acquiesce in all the US administration's dictates.

Boutros-Ghali's refusal to give in only made Washington's miscalculations more glaring. The no-holds-barred campaign against the secretary-general was launched after he refused to cover up the findings made by UN experts after the Qana massacre, which revealed that the slaughter of children, women and old people was pre-meditated. Boutros-Ghali's only leverage against the US's wrath was his decision to re-nominate himself for a second term. Notwithstanding the overwhelming numerical superiority of the secretary-general's supporters, the battle was lost from the start. The US will come to realise just how isolated the global policeman can be.

It is only natural that the world should congratulate Boutros-Ghali after his "defeat". He may no longer be secretary-general; but he has gained the world community's respect.



This week's Soapbox speaker is a senior columnist with Al-Ahram.

just one term in office.

In an attempt to outmanoeuvre the US's long arm, Boutros-Ghali announced publicly that he intended to run for a second term at his own responsibility. This was a serious miscalculation on his part, because the Americans also made their opposition to his candidacy public, turning an issue previously confined to the channels of secret diplomacy into an international media event. The public exchange of charges and counter-charges has been detrimental to all the parties, not least to the United Nations itself.

In an eloquent testimonial to Boutros-Ghali's adroitness, his bid for reelection is receiving ardent support from two apparently antipodal quarters: some of the most prominent American Jewish writers, as well as many Arabs, who considered his rejection a blow to national pride.

As Washington's insistence on Boutros-Ghali's replacement by another candidate increased, France — and, to a lesser extent, Europe — stepped up their campaign for his reelection, if only for part of a term. The current standoff must be resolved as soon as possible, not only for the sake of the United Nations, but for that of Boutros-Ghali himself. In the final analysis, only he can defuse the crisis before it reaches unmanageable proportions, by announcing that he will honour his earlier pledge not to seek a second term in office. I fear that by pressing for an extension, Boutros-Ghali is putting the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations on the line.

Let us imagine that he does succeed in staying on for another five years, either despite the objections of the United States, or with their approval. In the first case, the tensions that are bound to build up between the UN's general secretariat and the superpower that has taken it upon itself to administer the present world order, if only temporarily, would effectively paralyse the international organisation. In the second case, the concessions he will have to make to obtain the approval of the United States would make him a virtual hostage to that nation's will. In both cases, it would be a pyrrhic victory for which a heavy toll would be exacted, either from the international organisation or from its secretary-general.

I suggest that Boutros-Ghali consider rendering an alternative, and much more enduring, service to the international community by publishing an open report on the essence of his experience at the helm of the United Nations and how he sees its role in the coming century. Such a knowledgeable assessment of the weaknesses and strengths of the international organisation can help put it on the right track again and avert the looming danger of its becoming either a flaccid and largely useless appendage, or an iron rod in the hands of one of its member states to make all the others toe the line it has drawn.

The above article is this month's contribution by the writer to the column "Insights into the World", published by the Tokyo-based Daily Yomiuri and syndicated to 240 newspapers in the US and South East Asia.

To The Editor

Israel's cake

Sir: Is it possible to eat the cake and have it too? Israel made it possible, or rather imagined so.

Because politics and economics are inseparable, I expect Israel will have paid dearly for its anti-peace policy during and after the MENA Cairo conference.

To bring an end to Israeli intransigence and counteract its designs to impose its military and economic hegemony upon us, we, Arabs, should measure up to our responsibilities and close our ranks.

We should ardently enforce our boycott of Israel and stop normalising relations with it. We should also extend our hands to peaceloving groups in Israel. Finally, we should leave no stone unturned to oblige the Likud government to carry out its obligations. Once a comprehensive settlement is reached, only then will the shiny slogan of MENA Cairo conference, "Building for the Future" become a viable promise.

Mahmoud Elwa
Masadi

Ludicrous proposition

Sir: In his letter to the editor last week, Mr Zafir Kamel Hakim, who signs himself as an

English language teacher at Al Daher Secondary School for Girls, launched a vicious personal attack on Mr Roger Garandy, accusing Mr Garandy of not having grasped the essence of Islam because he had not mastered the Arabic language. Mr Hakim further accuses Mr Garandy of mental instability for becoming Muslim without knowledge of Arabic.

So according to Mr Hakim the prerequisite for understanding the essence of a religion is that one must master the language of its Book, or one is to be considered mentally unstable. By virtue of this criteria millions and millions of Christians and Jews around the world are to be regarded as mentally unstable since the majority of them have not mastered ancient Hebrew, the language of the Torah and Bible. Now perhaps it can be seen what a ludicrous proposition Mr Hakim puts forward. I note with pity that although Mr Hakim is clearly a native Arabic speaker himself, his own capacity in Arabic has clearly not pervaded the recesses of his mind sufficiently for him to have grasped the essence of Islam, and since he is not fluent in ancient Hebrew he could not possibly have grasped the essence of any other faith. According to his own criteria Mr Hakim is not even qualified to make his "pronouncement".

Michael Worth
Zamalek

The state and the man

The war against Boutros-Ghali has only damaged US credibility, writes Laila Takla

The United States is a funny country, inclined towards the newfangled and the unusual. It has an insatiable appetite for the strange and uncommon. Its "democratic" in the domain of conflict is the war it is waging against one man. No doubt a departure from the common pattern of warfare, in which one state is pitched against another, or one regime opposed to another, this type of war is also different from simple feuds between two individuals. It is unprecedented that any state, let alone a super-state which gloats about its principles, should challenge world opinion.

War was declared against Boutros Ghali when Warren Christopher informed the UN secretary-general on 12 May that the Clinton administration disapproved of his election to a second term of office. The message, which came as a shock to the world, raised a clamour of opposition from Peking to Budapest.

The war declared by the US against the secretary-general of the United Nations only undermines the ideals called for by the United States, overlooks the facts and challenges world opinion as well as the opinions of the American people itself.

During its domestic battle over elections and the conflict over government seats, the US administration tended to compromise freedom of speech and the right to choose, striving to impose its own will on the rest of the world. By vetoing the will of the majority of nations, the US is denying the principles of democracy

exemplified by respect for the will of the majority. Further, the US has failed to honour the principles of equality, checks and balances which constitute the foundations of the American system of government. If power is conceived as potentially generating corruption, absolute power only unleashes corruption that knows no limits. While claiming to be democratic, the United States is seeking to seize, single-handedly, the reins of global power by debilitate the United Nations.

To realise its ends, the United States is exerting all kinds of military and financial pressure in a bid to buy other nations' votes. The US, which is in the habit of sending its experts to all parts of the world to monitor the freedom of elections from outside pressures as a requisite for granting or withholding its assistance to those countries, is itself exerting all kinds of overt and covert pressures to influence the voters.

The US denies UN achievements accomplished under the leadership of its secretary-general, and doubts his commitment to peace and development. It denies his vigilance and the involvement of the international community in seeking solutions to problems threatening the world in the domains of the environment, women, population and development. These achievements are only to be added to his success in restructuring the UN, reducing its expenses and scaling down its staff.

The US attitude towards the UN secretary-general has been so provocative at the international level that certain high-ranking US officials noted that the attitude was damaging the national interests of the US itself. The *Chicago Tribune* even reported that numerous ambassadors to the UN had expressed their governments' anger at the arrogance and suppressive practices which characterised US behaviour, which seems to disregard the fact that the equality of all nations is one of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. The *Christian Science Monitor* inquires if the attack on "Ghali" is not prompted by his approval of the publication of the report of the commission investigating the brutal Israeli massacre in Qana, heedless of [US ambassador to the UN] Albright's warnings.

Regardless of the outcome of the war waged by the US against Ghali, and whether or not the US intends to break the secretary-general himself, or to flex its own muscles as the world looks on, bemused, its actions have backfired. The US has only debilitated itself and undermined its prestige. As for Boutros-Ghali, his prestige was not even dented — nor was he defied. On the contrary: he has gained much in influence and the support of the world community.

The writer is UN commissioner for development and culture and chair of the Central Association for Environmental Preservation.

asked for personal revelations, while this week the Arab world's leading poets will gather in Cairo for the Festival of Arabic poetry

From An Allegory and Seven Gates

The Iraqi poet Saadi Youssef, who will be reading his poetry during Saturday's opening of the Festival of Arabic Poetry, wrote *An Allegory and Seven Gates* in 1988, when he

was living in Belgrade. Given the autobiographical nature of the poem, it seems logical to read Baghdad — a city the poet has not visited since 1979 — for Marrakech.

At the opening of the four day festival Saadi Youssef will be joined by Mahmoud Darwish and Ahmed Abdel-Moeti Hegazi, among others, on stage at the Cairo Opera House

By Saadi Youssef

Prelude: Two branches that have been broken
Let me then light two candles and enter
On which of your gates do I knock
or at dusk spread my banquet on its threshold?
The walls are staring
there is writing
and a book of secrets made from pottery,
a water wheel turning
and the colour a desert
(writing is reconciled to me and writing is...)

How do I enter,
on which of your gates do I knock
or at dusk spread my banquet?
Dusk on the walls, the lone tower hostage to
the soldiers' night

and the roads invisible
The hue of plaster on the wall the only light
for in the darkness of this labyrinth
it alone appears in contrast light...
Where is the brass lantern
with rotating light
green
then blue
then a world made of brass?
Was Red Marrakech not in this place,
was the gate not here with divans
and ank?

Are the tips of the ank buried in the sand,
beneath the travelling gold
that comes and goes?
And where is my library?
True, it is two centuries since we were
separated

yet still I see the shelves packed
gilded
Morocco leather
with calligraphy that betrays nothing of its
writer

Let me sit a while by the curve of the wall
and remember the roads...
Who knows?
Maybe I will end alone
and who knows?
Maybe I will recognise the gate I used to take:
It is Red Marrakech.

I
To the snow or to the sand,
say:
To the snow or to the sand,
then comes Granada!

Palm trees in the suburbs
push your steps further
towards God's land,
towards a fetish knotted in the soul.
How did such palm trees
come to be here,
how were they suddenly erected?

What dates glowed like camelians from
Yemen,
over these ears of barley
at breakfast time...
The first breeze comes off the palm leaves,
the other is heavy with cedar.

You migrant palm trees
you distant mountain
the water chills my palm
holding wild thyme,
mint
myth...

The ship has sailed
and wondrous Valencia is distant.
We shall return to desert paths
and shall proceed, as we did, on the postal
routes,
caravans shall chase one another like the beads
of a rosary.

Ploughing through the sand,
through our canals' bones
our destination will be Africa,
or exile,
on the fingertips of those we love will be:
the night
heaven
and gold,
will be
death and games

And here I am, the stranger circling the walls.
The dying palm trees do not converse with me
nor is the fragrance of cedar folded in the
breeze...

Maybe those I love have gone
and I remain...
I am not a sword nourished by the glimmer of
the blade.
I only want to meet those I love
O lone tower.

II
Three ends of the house are surrounded by
streams
and the water quiets
beneath a bridge made from grasses and reeds.
The water comes from afar.
There are the summits, invisible,
but they are white
they said: beyond them lies the desert
they said: beyond is black Africa
Timbuktu, and the kingdom of kingdoms
and waited men

The house is surrounded by streams
into the cold water I dipped my left palm and
waited
to find my right palm trembling.
I combed the grass with reeds
Perhaps termites, generously, would come
racing
Perhaps the grasshopper would appear, green
and maybe the djinn's promised treasure
would be at hand.

Oh the house!
In winter we sheltered from the mountain wind
passing.

in the sun of its small courtyard
cloaked
with songs and prayer
with our mother,
Oh the house

Have my steps, in twenty years of jour-
neying
covered more ground than that allowed
by the limits of the horizon,
a greater distance than borders which I
did not define,
further than the extremities of sight?
If the ends of the house in Marrakech
have dissembled
what meaning then remains for that
house?

And if the path to the house is lost to me
what is the use of a path to the house?

You standing on the tower!
You soldiers of the city!
You drunkards of Execution Square!
You warehouse walls!

III
I shall be a potter.
My father said: you will leave us then?
And I say: how?
He says: whoever creates the shape of
birds from clay shall fly.

But I wrapped my cloak around me,
and left for the market...
Confronted by Ibn Hafsum's shop
I drew near, muttering, gazing at the
pottery

Ibn Hafsum asked:
Do you come to buy?
Take a jar
Take this pot
That urn.
Take a bird...
And when you grow up
bring me the first dirham of your
destined earnings, my son.

I took the bird
and sat, confused, turning it...
And Ibn Hafsum whispered:
As if, my son, you want wings
Come...
And audaciously he pulled me:
You shall be a potter,
And I shall get the first dirham of your
destined earnings,
my son.

And here I return
with 20 years through the kingdoms of
the earth in tow

Return:
I made thousands of birds
I turned thousands of pots delicate as the
breezes
In Valencia I discovered the alchemy of
colours
In Baghdad I taught the young the heat
of fire

I wanted wings
And I flew
As if my name was the wandering bird...

And today, I ended here, with this dif-
ficult evening:
Do I enter
or depart once more?
But Ibn Hafsum asks of me
the first dirham of my destined earnings...

IV
And if ever I entered for whom should I ask?
And what woman will intuit my night stop?
The completeness of dusk
the desolation of paths
spies who watch the star
from the casements of the tower...
Let me be calm for a moment
and rest my head upon a stone:
I am exhausted with wandering
with night paths.

Aisha
open a window of your deserted palace
look out for a moment
for I stand behind the wall...
Beautiful Aisha,
does light ebb,
fade, suddenly melting in the dungeon?
I thought my rendezvous was promised
but years go by and the wagons have gone far
and the caravans
and the women they give birth or else are
born...

Will the traveller find anything beyond the gift
of the pillow

in the darkness of the night:
Your face, growing smaller
growing bigger
calming
warming... in my hands,
as if I did not loosen your hair that curled into
kisses

on your bare shoulders,
beautiful Aisha
clove
lost musk
taste of basil
the spring of my wrinkled eyelids
open from your enchanted palace a window
look out for a moment...
for I stand behind the wall.

No whisper comes from Red Marrakech
no waving
no glow from a window.
The dawn will come slowly, dust-laden
and slower still will I tread paths tired of my
passing.



Illustration: Gamil Shefik

فألمأ قليلا
ولأج رأسي على حجر،
تصب من الطرف
ومن ديب الليل،
مأشقة
أنص من أصوات الموجر نائمة
أطلي خطه
إني راء، الصور...
عائشة البهية
هل يخبئ النور
في خفية، فيلرب في النجوم؟
عائشة البهية
كنت أحس بموجعي وعا
ولكن السنين قر
والعيات تاتي
والقائل
والنساء، بلدن أو يولدن
هل يجد المسافر غير ماذهب الواسدة
في خبي، الليل،
رجله وهو يصر
وهو يكر
وهو يها
وهو يفا... في يني،
كأنني لم أتر الشعر الذي جندته فيلا
على كتفك عاردين،
عائشة البهية
يا ترنلة
وسكا خلما
بالمصممي
وبالزمان أبطاني الغضنة
انص من فصر المسحر نائمة
أطلي خطه...
إني راء، الصور...
لاص من مراكش الحراء
لا تلبس
لا إيمان نائمة
بطنا سوف يأتي الفجر، مغبرا
وأظنا منه سوف أكون في الطرق التي ملأت سراي.

سعدى يوسف

سجاسة وسبعة أبواب

غصنان و أنكسرا

لأرد شمعتين، إذن، وأدخل
أي باب، منك أطرق
أو أقدم وليعتني، غصنا، علي عباته؟
الأشجار شامخة
ورم كناية
وكتاب أسرار من الفخار،
دولاب يدور ياته
واللبن صبرا،
(الكناية صالحة والكناية...)

كيف أدخل
أي باب، منك أطرق
أو أقدم وليعتني؟
غصن علي الأشجار
والبرج الوحيد أسير ليل الجند
والفرقات خافية

يكاد الجبس وهو يره الجدران يسي التبد
في عتات هذا الليله
يسي وجهه التور الخالف...

أين مصباح التحاس يدور فيه النور
أخضر
ثم أرقه؟
ثم كونا كالتحاس؟

ألم تكن مراكش الحراء، في هذا المكان؟
ألم تكن في بابها، هنا، الأوتاهة؟
والأوتاهة؟

هل أخفت عباته في الرمل؟
في اللهب المسافر
في الرياح والرياح؟
وأين مكنتني؟

لقد فارتقا فزيت، حقا
غير أني ما أزال أرى الزفوف متضحات
منحبات

جلدها التفران، والحظ الذي لا يشبه الخطاط
فأجلس قليلا عند منى السور
ولأذكر الطرقات ...

من يدري؟
لعلني أنهي وحدي
ومن يدري
لعلني أعرف الباب التي كانت تودي:
إنها مراكش الحراء...

للشبح أو للرمز
قل،
للشبح أو للشمس ...

ثم نجني، غرناطة ا
...
لكن نخل بالظراحي، ينقل الحطرات أهد
نور أرض الله

نور قبة مقرفة بالروح
كيف أقام هذا النخل عندك
كيف قام

وأي قرأت على كسر الشعر تروحت
معل العقيق وأيا في لحظة الإظلم ...
تأتي القصة الأولى من السمفات

والأخرى تراج بالصنوبر
أيها النخل المهاجر
أيها الجبل الجيد

لما، بطلع راجحي مسكا بالزعرير العربي
بالتعاق
بالمرد

السفينة أقلت
ونأت بالنسبة المجدبة ...
سوف ترجع للسور
وسوف تسري، مقاما كما، على طرق البريد

وسوف تستيق القرائل مثل مسبعة
تغرض في الرمال
وفي مقام جمالنا

سكون إفريقيا للثاني
أو الثني
تكون على أنامل من تسيد الليل
والحناء

والحناء
تكون الموت واللها.
...
وها أنا، القريب، أطرق بالأشجار
لا النخل الذي يادي بياسموني

ولا أرح الصنوبر في الشية ...
رفا ذهب الذين أحبهم
وبقيت ...
لست السيف كي أحمي علي ما، القرد،
بأيها البرج الوحيد

...
البيت تلمه الجدار من ثلاث جهات
ولما، بهذا
تحت قنطرة من الأشجار والقصب الخفيف

لما، يأتي من بعيد
تحت القنطرة التي ليست ترى
لكنها يهوا
قالوا: يهوا الصغراء
قالوا: يهوا إفريقيا الصغراء

Plain Talk

A great deal of publicity has been generated by the proposal to make a film based on the October War. The army commissioned a particular scenarioist whose previous credits include a popular and long running soap opera, to write the script. It is not my intention here to comment on the choice of scriptwriter but merely to comment on one or two general issues that relate to the making of war films.

Certainly war films are an ever popular genre, and though the actual battles they seek to represent occurred at different times and in different places — Europe is the setting for a plethora of Second World War movies, Vietnam the site of American soul-searching throughout the seventies and eighties — they have certain things in common, not least what is perceived by their makers to be a general appeal. "In the 20th century each American war has been fought twice, first on the battlefield, later on celluloid." So began a journalist writing about a new Hollywood project, *Desert Storm*, based on America's most recent war, that in the Gulf. *Desert Storm* is not, however, the only film that the Gulf war has spawned. Five years after the event *Courage Under Fire* is scheduled to open next week, and while it appears destined to be a box office success questions are already being asked about its contents.

Those critics who attended preview screenings of the film have apparently been fairly unanimous in their praise for a film that, one critic insists, "is a carefully conceived, dramatically honourable film that treats its subject with clarity and intelligence". This, however, is not a view shared by the top brass at the Pentagon, who have been quick to voice their unhappiness with *Courage Under Fire*.

Apparently, if filmmakers are to receive any assistance in the making of their films from the American military they must first submit the script for approval by the military authorities. Any help in aiding the filmmakers to lend veracity to the events they portray, for example by using army equipment, tanks, planes and the like, is contingent on such approval. Yet in the case of the film under discussion the Pentagon appears to have taken umbrage about certain aspects of the script which appeared to indicate that the war did not progress fully in accordance with US army regulations. Wars, as ever, seem to have a habit of getting out of hand, particularly on the ground. The Pentagon demanded major revisions to the script.

Hollywood has been producing war films at least since the 1920s, when King Vidor directed *The Big Parade*, using, courtesy of the military establishment, 200 trucks, 4,000 troops and 100 planes. The films, like the wars they sought to represent, got bigger, more complex, more costly as the century has drawn towards its close. And less than fifty years after King Vidor's beginning *The Longest Day*, shot in 1961, involved support by the US, British, French and German military commands.

Of course, the urge to glorify military victories on the screen is always likely to prove an irresistible temptation. But a war film that lacks drama, that lacks believable characters acting believably in incredible situations, is destined to fail. War films are not, after all, documentaries. They are dramatizations — ie fictions — no more and no less. And it is in this difference that the pitfalls lie. For what is dramatically true, what is true on stage and on screen, is a particular truth, and it need not be the only one. And what actually happens on the ground is seldom quite what we would have wanted to happen. There are discrepancies, anomalies, heroes being unheroic, a confusion of motives and of means. The trauma of war throws human fallibilities into greater relief, and there is never anything clear cut about our feelings and our strengths, let alone what lies behind them.

And therein lies the problem of the war film, for if it is ever to be anything more than post-event sabre rattling, if it is to be successful as drama, it must explore the complexities of the human condition, the vagaries of character under stress, and in so doing can never be reduced to the black and white that some might wish.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Travelling ahead

No more sun-sea-sand vacations. A meeting of tourism specialists in Sharm El-Sheikh determined where and how tourists will travel in the next decade. Sherine Nasr attended

Tourism experts from eight countries met in Sharm El-Sheikh last month to deliberate the latest international studies in the fields of tourism, marketing and promotion. The results clearly indicated that 21st century tourists will not be easy to please.

Professionals from the USA, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Hungary, Brazil and Egypt organised the conference to discuss the future of international tourism. Their primary goals were to analyse tourist psychology and determine the types of holidays they will demand.

Tourist countries, including Egypt, recognise that they will have to adapt to new concepts of promotion, hospitality and environmental control in order to continue competing in the industry.

"Travelling is increasingly becoming a lifestyle — a necessity rather than just a way to spend a holiday or leisure time," said Said Mousa, former president of the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA).

The nature of travelling, too, has changed. "The sun-sea-sand vacation, which attracted tourists in the seventies and eighties, will no longer dominate the field, due to increasing awareness of the dangers associated with overexposure to the sun," he said.

Consumers will demand more and when their needs aren't met, they won't hesitate to complain. "The majority of consumers will finally understand the relation between cost and quality," said Mario Beni, a senior professor at the School of Art and Communication in Brazil.

These are expected changes in the age of computer terminals and the Internet. "Tour operators and travel agencies will certainly face difficult times because people will soon be able to make their own reservations on the Internet from their homes," he said.

Holzer Vogel, a German tourism expert, anticipates that tourists will travel more frequently but on shorter visits. Egypt, for example, will not occupy a whole week on a tourist's agenda. "A three-day visit to cover the main historical sites in Cairo, Luxor and Aswan will be enough because there is a second, third and perhaps fourth trip to go on during the year," he said. Visiting the main attractions of a destination, doing a bit of shopping and flying back home will most likely provide a way to spend several weekends abroad.

There will also be a high demand for inexpensive vacations. "The increase in the number of tours doesn't necessarily mean an increase in profits for the tourism industry. The more often people travel, the better bargains they will expect," Vogel said.

A daily overload of information from mass media in the European and American markets results in what Vogel calls the 'already-know' syndrome. "It is becoming difficult to interest tourists because they already know everything," he explained. Promoting Egypt and its main historical sites by conventional means may soon prove unsuccessful.

Tourists now search for active relaxation. "Of-

fering them a nice beach, a bazaar and good food will not be enough because they have done it already," he said. The tourism industry, consequently, will be expected to provide new destinations and activities as tourists look for more and more exotic holidays.

Another result of the 'already-know' syndrome is that travellers will demand better services at lower prices. "Tourists are used to good services at low prices. That is why travel agencies try to offer the less expensive complete packages," Vogel explained.

This makes it difficult for local people in a country such as Egypt to earn any extra money from the tourists. "People on package tours are less likely to pay for additional services. They know they will get full board, accommodations and every possible service for one price," he said. "Therefore, the competition among tourist companies will also increase, which will mean more 'dumping-sales' at very low prices," he said.

In the 21st century, advanced hospitality programmes will become more important than ever before. "Hotel staff will no longer be persons who happen to work in the field. Hotels will need to employ qualified staff to serve guests more effectively," said Robert Huber, a tourism educator in Germany. "Hospitality education is an industry challenge, and problems with it exist in Egypt as in any other tourist destination," he said, pointing out that training pro-

grammes have not changed significantly in the last 25 years. "There is always a shortage of experts who can train the younger generations," he said. Hanan Qattara, a teacher at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, indicated that the great expansion of hotels in Egypt has led to an extreme shortage of trained staff.

A solution to this problem is on-the-job training. "But trainees frequently feel lost during their internships," she said.

Qattara conducted a survey which revealed that out of Egypt's 407 independent hotels, 283 offer no employee training programmes "because they don't believe they are important," she said. Only four out of 18 chains in Egypt provide management training programmes. While 75 per cent of the hotels have special criteria for selecting trainees, none of them offer periodic development reviews. "The survey gave most hotels in Egypt a 'poor' rating with regard to management programmes," she said.

"Education is not a cost, but an investment. Once we can convince hotels of this, there is a chance to improve the quality of service," commented Richard Butler, president of the International Academy of Tourism in Canada.

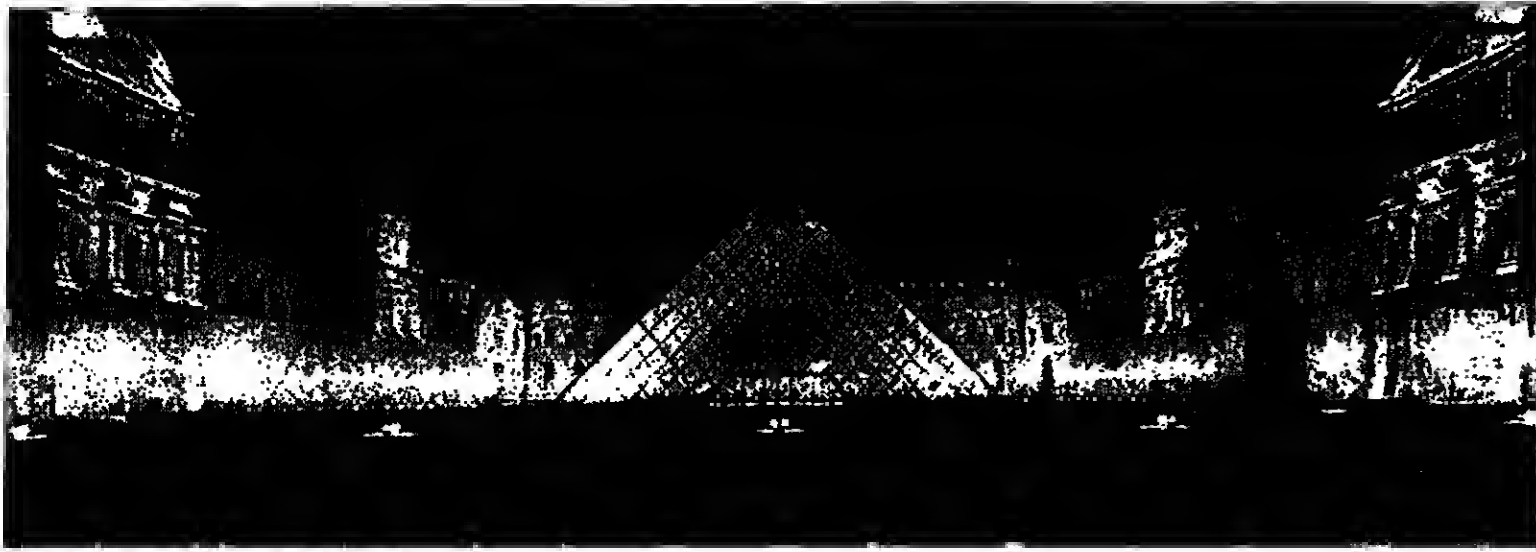
Environment preservation will become an important tourism factor in the next decade. "We seem to take the view that once a place is a tourist site, it will always be one. We have to face the fact, however, that some places will become unmarketable if they deteriorate environmentally," said Butler. Un-

restricted sea-sport activities in Hurgada, for example, will most likely destroy the area. "Establishing environmental awareness before tourism began would have been much more beneficial. If activities are prohibited now, tourists will feel they are losing something," he said. "It is also a question of upkeep," Vogel said, citing Sharm El-Sheikh, with its coral reefs, desert, mountains and excellent facilities as an example. "If one aspect was destroyed, the whole area would disappear from the tourist map."

The coming decade will witness the growth of two relatively new tourist groups, disabled and third-age (retired) travellers. "Disabled persons have become more confident and, therefore, travel more extensively. They know what they need and are willing to pay more for the extra services. If their needs are not met, however, they won't come again," said Vogel.

"Disabled tourists need special facilities, including larger parking areas, toilets and rooms. Egypt, unfortunately, has done very little to accommodate these needs," commented Mohammed Amin, another Egyptian tourism expert.

Retired Americans, Europeans, Australians and Japanese are also touring the world. "Third-age travellers are bound to become an important factor in the future of tourism," said Brazil's Beni, "and the development of facilities for them at the domestic and international levels will be essential."



Pyramids everywhere, including the Louvre

Egyptomania hits the malls

Inspiration from Pharaonic antiquities is nothing new, but these days, as Nevine El-Aref reports, even malls and stadiums are shaped like the Pyramids

The influence of Ancient Egypt on the modern world has been varied and subject to the vagaries of fashion. In Roman times mosaics of Nile scenes adorned country houses in Italy. In the 19th century, courts of law, prisons and bus stations were fashioned like Egyptian temples. Today we even have basketball stadiums inspired by the Pyramids: one in Memphis, Tennessee, and another in Long Beach, California.

The fashion has even taken hold in the Arab world, where Dubai started decorating the tops of their malls with small pyramids instead of the expected domes. And their new Sheraton Hotel was built in the shape of a pyramid.

People have been mimicking the Ancient Egyptians for thousands of years, but perhaps the biggest boost to Egyptomania this century came when Tutankhamun's treasures were exhibited in the USA in 1974. The boy pharaoh generated so much interest in ancient Egypt that both towels were adorned with his image, table linen featured Egyptian gods and symbols and even toilet paper decorated with hiero-

glyphics flooded the market.

When a Chinese American presented a blueprint for a cultural centre in the shape of a pyramid in front of the Louvre in Paris, there was an uproar by the French who regarded it as violating the architectural features of their famous museum. But the pyramid was built anyway, its interior adorned with Pharaonic themes, and now, says Zahi Hawass, general director of the Giza Plateau, "the pyramid has become one of the most important landmarks in Paris."

We all know about the Las Vegas extravaganza. They have built reproductions of everything there, from pyramids and sphinxes to obelisks. Its most imaginative creation, the Luxor Hotel, is a gambling centre in the shape of a pyramid, its interior complete with a simulation of the Nile.

When it comes to the outright bizarre, an American contractor in Illinois takes the cake: he was so inspired by Egyptian antiquities that he built a home in the shape of a pyramid and covered its outer walls in 24 carat gold. The house cost 60 million dollars and

took over a year to build. The master bedroom is shaped like Tutankhamun's tomb, and smaller pyramids were constructed beside the house to authenticate his reproduction of the Giza Plateau. A life-size statue of Ramses II stands in the garden.

Hawass, who visited the house during a recent trip to the US explained that every morning it is opened to visitors "who want to get a taste of real Pharaonic life. At night, the sightseers move out and the owner, his wife and 11 children take up residence."

"The owner told me that the revenue accrued from ticket sales is divided between two causes," Hawass said. "Half is donated to the church where he was married, and the other half is used to combat drug abuse."

In the technologically-advanced 1990's, museums around the world have exact replicas of famous monuments, jewellery and statues in their shops and bookstores. Once all this information — from fabricated pyramids to ancient perfumes — is fed into the Internet, the world may witness an unbelievable boom in Egyptomania.

How to get there

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-463.

Cairo-Alexandria

Services almost every half hour from 3.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets: LE19 until 9pm; LE2 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 9pm; LE30 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15pm. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh

Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets: LE36. Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32. Cairo-Port Said Services every half hour from 6am to 8pm, then 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said Services 6.45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurgada Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurgada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurgada Services 8pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurgada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Services 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company Buses travel to North/South Sinai.

Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramses Square), Almaza and Tahrir Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan "French" deluxe trains with sleepers: Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians. "Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers: Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE31; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria "Torbil" trains: VIP trains. Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal. Standard trains: Service 8am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE31; air-conditioned bus LE35, one way.

Cairo-Suez Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE31; air-conditioned bus LE35, one way.

Cairo-Alexandria Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE31; air-conditioned bus LE35, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Hurgada Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurgada Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Suez Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Damietta Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai.

Cairo-Luxor Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE29 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurgada Tickets LE179 for Egyptians, LE89 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Compiled by Rehab Saad



Rural Egypt as a tourist attraction

photo: Sherif Sonbol

Rural tourism spotlighted

Journalists from several Mediterranean countries, including Egypt, gathered recently in Syria to discuss ways to cooperate and boost tourism in the region. Rehab Saad reports

Members of the Organisation Méditerranéenne de Journalistes et Ecrivains Touristiques — Mediterranean Organisation for Tourist Journalists and Writers (OMJET) — recently held their seventh conference in Syria. "This year we concentrated on promoting rural tourism, an increasingly popular trend in Europe. We're trying to encourage it in the Mediterranean countries as well," said Salah Attia, deputy chairman of OMJET.

Attia believes that a certain calibre of tourist is becoming interested in village communities, the sociology of the villages and their rate of immigration to cities. "Our next conference will be entirely dedicated to this issue. We will discuss the

development of this idea," he said, implying that depending on the reaction of the villagers, rural tourism promotion could, in the long run, help remove the need for their urban migration.

Another issue discussed at the meeting was the precarious future of travel writing. "Modern equipment, such as the Internet could threaten the future of travel writers," said Attia. "Journalists will have to know how to deal with modern technology."

OMJET was founded in Tunisia in 1989 and held its first meeting in Cairo in 1990, during the Gulf crisis. Subsequent meetings have been held each year in different Mediterranean countries, where members gather to discuss tourism-related issues.

"We mix business with travel," said Attia. "After the conference we tour the host country, thereby expanding our knowledge about each of the Mediterranean countries."

This year, the tour of Syria included visits to the old and new sections of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Hama, Latakia and Palmyra.

OMJET concentrates on two main issues: promoting tourism to the Mediterranean countries and preserving the environment. "The Mediterranean is the most polluted sea in the world, with approximately 30 countries dumping their waste in it. We hope to save it," Attia said.

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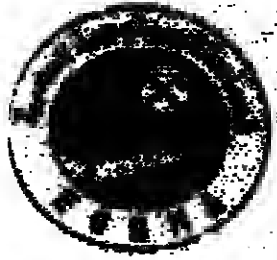
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مَكْزَا مِنْ الْأَصْلِ



The centennial of the Egyptian Geological Survey

International celebration at the Cairo International Conference Centre
19-22 November 1996



A century of the Egyptian Geological Survey

THE EGYPTIAN Geological Survey was founded in March 1896 during the time of Khedive Abbas Helmi II. It is the oldest geographical society in the Middle East and Africa, and the sixth oldest in the world. Since its establishment, it has taken part in providing the necessary geological surveys to companies operating within the industrial, housing and agricultural sectors. It has prepared geological maps of Egypt at the highest standard of accuracy for use in development and underground operations. It is presently working on a geotechnical study to determine locations for new communities

and engineering structures, searching for underground water and studying natural disasters and ways to limit their effects. The idea of a centennial celebration came in 1993, when a number of agencies decided to organise an international celebration, bringing together leading personalities and scientists from various countries of the world to attest to Egypt's distinguished position in the world of science and culture. Celebrations are taking place from 19-22 November 1996. The opening was attended by high-ranking national officials. A scientific conference with the theme

"Geological Surveys and Sustainable Development" is also being held. The conference includes 36 sessions attended by 170 foreign and 450 Egyptian scientists.

Research papers will be presented on a variety of topics, including:

— Modern techniques for discovering mineral resources.

— Natural disasters, such as earthquakes and floods, and how to limit their effects.

— Geotechnical studies necessary for establishing new communities, major engineering projects, and discovering underground springs.



The Egyptian Geological Survey and Mining Authority has played a major role over the past century

On the sidelines of the conference will be a meeting between heads of geological surveys to discuss ways of future co-operation.

Compiled by

Haitham M. Selma
Mansour M. Aglan

Innovation in GIS image processing

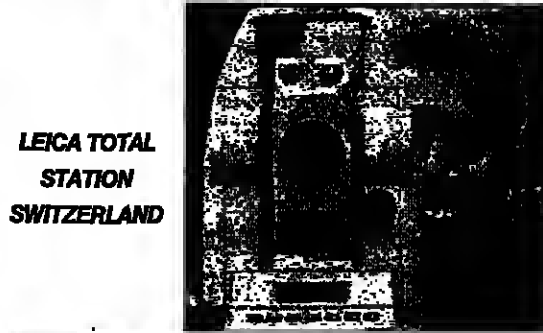
MIDDLE East Scientific, serving academia since 1979, represents US and European companies in geophysics (particularly paleomagnetism). MSA also distributes the well-known computer programmes ER Mapper & MapInfo for GIS image processing, remote sensing, and map composition.

MSA recently installed an integrated paleomagnetic lab for the Egyptian Geological Survey Authority. A similar lab being installed at Tanta University.

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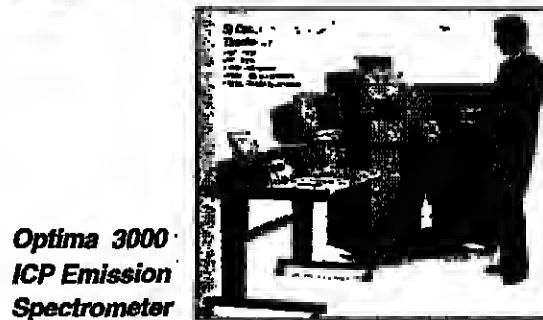
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GEOMAP Consultants

sources radar data in Egypt

GEOMAP Consultants has signed a co-operation agreement with Radersat International to develop and promote radar applications in Egypt.

Radersat is the world leader in satellite radar imagery.

"The introduction of the radar applications in Egypt by Geomap is one of the main efforts to encourage the use of this valuable source of satellite data in local applications," said Mr. Adrian Bohane, Radersat representative.

Dr. Mohsen Badawy, director of Geomap Consultants, added that "The use of radar data is complementary to the optical multi-spectral satellite data in a number of fields and ap-

plications." Geomap Consultants, as a leading company in the field of mapping, remote sensing and GIS, has developed its services to include optical SPOT imagery and Radersat data. Geomap also represents PCI International and distributes the well-known EASI/PACE image processing software. This software is used by the company to produce a number of sophisticated value-added products such as Digital Elevation Models.

Throughout its activities, Geomap Consultants firmly believes that product support and customer service are the keys to success. "Services not only means the timely delivery of products and the guarantee of their quality," said Badawy, "but it also means the local after-sale support which includes long-term assistance provided to the customer in terms of consultation, training and experience sharing."

ERSS: Your source for GIS technology

THE ENVIRONMENTAL and Remote Sensing Services Centre, ERSS, is one of the pioneering companies in Egypt and the Middle East, supplying the region with the latest technology in the fields of remote sensing, space science and geographical information systems (GIS). This technology has proven to be successful in applications such as the environment, mapping, cartography, oil exploration, Earth monitoring and geological operations.

ERSS is able to provide hardware and software for satellite image processing and GIS, satellite images from a variety of Earth observation satellites, GPS (Global Positioning Systems), consultancy, specialised/customised training and project management in the fields of remote sensing and GIS.

ERSS is considered the founder of this type of technology in the field and has been in existence for almost a decade. Due to its extensive experience and trained staff, ERSS is capable of handling entire national and regional projects and studies.

Techno Scient specialises in geological survey equipment

HEADEO by Hussein Nagui, Techno Scient company is one of the major companies specialised in optical laboratory and survey equipment. The company has worked in this field for twenty years and it is also specialised in microscopic polarized light, microscopic geological researches, and enlarging microscopes of the Swiss brand LIKA. The company also has electronic survey equipment used in all survey works, and LIKA GPS equipment. Techno Scient also has chemical test equipment, and it supplies the geological laboratories and research centres with such equipment, in particular mineral analysis equipment of the American brand Berkin Elmer. In addition to that, the company has the German Sartorius brand laboratory scales. It also has furnaces of the German brand Harriers. Techno Scient has maintenance centers to offer post-sale service as engineer Hossam Nagui, manager of the company said.

EL-Nasr Phosphate Company

EL-NASR Phosphate Company is a subsidiary of the Holding Company for Mining and Quarries based in Mahamid, Edfu, Aswan. The company, which covers the local market, operates in the field of mining and excavating raw minerals. The company also exports its products to foreign countries, and is considered the leading company in its field in Egypt. The company deals in approximately 400,000 tons annually of phosphate, talcum, aluminum, calcium carbonate, bright kaolin, asbestos, magnesium, feldspar and non-kaolin quartz. The company has its own mines that provide these minerals, and it is capable of doubling these quantities. The company is assured of having a large quantity of reserves which will sustain it for the next hundred years.

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phosphate Ore: فوسفات

Chemical Specifications	
P ₂ O ₅	27.00-30.20%
CaO	47.20-49.00%
MgO	0.71-0.82%
Fe ₂ O ₃	1.56-1.48%
Al ₂ O ₃	0.53-0.40%
SiO ₂	7.9-7.48%
Na ₂ O	0.56-0.56%
K ₂ O	0.06-0.06%
F	2.66-3.10%
L.O.I.	10.16-7.86%
CaCO ₃	17.50-12.72%

El Menite

Chemical Specifications:

Fe ₂ O ₃	27.00-28.00%
FeO	26.00-27.00%
TiO ₂	36.00-37.00%
Al ₂ O ₃	1.06-1.08%
SiO ₂	approx. 4.00%
CaO	approx. 0.15%
Na ₂ O + K ₂ O	Max 0.25%
Maintain and minimum of Fe + Ti	= 80.00%
Physical Properties:	
Rock ore: Red Brown - Dark Brown	
Density 4.0-4.3 gm/cm ³	
Rock Size: Fine under 10mm	
Coarse from 10mm-40mm	

Magnetite ore

Chemical Analysis:

SiO ₂	3.74%
CaO	7.33-8.4%
MgO	39.39-37.30%
Fe ₂ O ₃	0.94%
Physical Properties: Rock ore	
Colour: White - Gray white	
Size: From 1-25 cm	
Density: 1.37 gm/cm ³	

نتائج التحليل

Chemical Analysis:

SiO ₂	62.5%
MgO	31.0%
Al ₂ O ₃	1.0%
Fe ₂ O ₃	Trace to 0.5%
Physical Properties: Rock ore	
Size From 5.00mm to 250 mm	
Density 2.75 gm/cm ³	
Fine, colour very white	
Talc must be free of Asbestos	

Mineralogy:

Talc 94-98%
Chlorides 0.5%
Others 0.1%

Feldspar ore

Chemical Specifications:

	Red Feldspar	White Feldspar
Loss on Ignition	0.55-0.30%	0.30%
SiO ₂	64.93-73.98%	64.13%
Al ₂ O ₃	18.00-13.04%	17.95%
Fe ₂ O ₃	0.20-0.50%	0.06%
CaO	0.15-0.11%	0.15%
MgO	0.2-0.02%	0.06%
K ₂ O	12.61-9.63%	14.50%
Na ₂ O	2.50-2.29%	2.53%

Physical Properties:

Colour: Rock Red Pink not white mixed with red and black pieces
Fine: White White
Density: 2.5-2.8 gm/cm³
Rock Ore: Size from 1 cm-25 cm free from Mica

Quartz Ore

Chemical Specifications:

SiO ₂	Min. 98.5-99.5%
Al ₂ O ₃	Max. 0.35-0.2%
CaO	Max. 0.1-0.08%
Fe ₂ O ₃	Max. 0.35-0.05%
Physical Properties: Rock ore	
Size: Max. 25 cm	
Colour: White	
Density: 2.5 gm/cm ³	
Hardness: 7.0	

Pack of cards *by Madame Sosostri*

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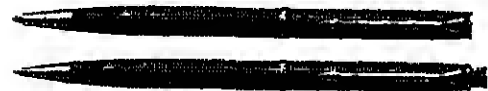
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(R-L) Radwan, Walker, Ebeid, Mrs Walker, Gonda, Shehab and Patton

♥ I bet you've missed me, dears, these past weeks, but as they say, parting makes the heart grow fonder, and distance does lead to enchantment. Too true. But I haven't been making myself scarce intentionally: what with having to prove and put up to welcome Daniel Weadock, president and chief executive of ITT Sheraton Corporation, and with Ambassador Ismail Mubarak, director of international relations, of the Gezira Sheraton asking me to shine particularly during the reception, I forgot to write. What a reception it was! Held on the Nile Terrace of the Gezira Sheraton, the soirée positively sparkled — almost as much as I did. I must say Daniel looked a little dazed when he saw me appear as Neferiti.

He must have been bowled over by my beauty. I can't think of another reason: it was a Pharaonic night, after all.

♦ A totally different look was required to attend the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Global Fulbright Program and the 47th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Egypt. Here, elegant simplicity was the name of the game. Hosting the alumni dinner attended by hundreds of guests was Ann Radwan, executive director of the Binational Fulbright Commission in Egypt. In the crowd, craning my neck, I managed to spot Minister of Education Dr Hussein Kamel Bahmedalla, Ambassador Edward Walker and Mrs Walker, Political Scientist

Mona Makram Ebeid, Venice Kamel Gonda, minister of scientific research, Moustaf Shehab, president of Cairo University, and Carl Patton, president of Georgia University.

♦ The Carmen Miranda style which I made famous (although Carmen took all the credit) will have to be toned down and replaced by a strict business suit if I am to attend the panel discussion cunningly titled: "The Cairo Economic Conference: An assessment and a look to the future", held at AUC on 24 November. I can't wait to hear the Honorable Edward S. Walker, US ambassador; Galal A. Zerba, the chairman of the Nile Clothing Co., Shane O'Leary, Amoco Egypt Oil Company's manager of commercial affairs; and Heba Handoussa, the managing director of the Economic Research Forum. My good friend Adel Elshai, chairman of the economics department at AUC, will be the moderator. You can well imagine that the parakeet wings adorning my Neferiti turban will have to go.

♦ On to less weighty matters: "Back to Romance" is the title of Azza Fahmy's jewellery exhibition, celebrating her 25 years of jewellery-making, to be held on 26 November. Come to think of it, I could celebrate quite a few years in jewellery myself. I remember when I sang "Diamonds..." Of course, Marilyn got all the credit for that. I think I shall sew a few extra beads and bangles on the parakeet wings...



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